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"ELUSIVE AGREEMENT": THE SPORAZUM OF 1939 AND THE SERB-CROAT DISPUTE IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN CRISIS

by
DANA M. MANGHAM

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ABSTRACT

"Elusive Agreement": The Sporazum of 1939 and the Serb-Croat
Dispute in the Context of European Crisis

by

Dana M. Mangham



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The very real danger of Axis attack played a major role in the Sporazum's development and eventual failure; however, the foreign threat is more correctly viewed as one agent of the agreement's failure, rather than as its root cause.

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NOTE ON DIACRITICAL MARKS

Due to technical limitations involving word-processing and text reproduction, standard Serbo-Croatian diacritical marks have been omitted from this work. With the exception of the diacritics, spellings reflect the original Serbo-Croatian forms; no transliterations are used, except as necessary to accurately quote contemporary sources.

Though this technical limitation is regrettable, it is believed that it will constitute no appreciable obstacle for those familiar with this field. For those not acquainted with their use, diacritics are of minimal relevance in any case.

INTRODUCTION

The national question has justifiably been described as "Yugoslavia's eternally central question."¹ From the birth of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in December 1918, until the collapse of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in April 1941, the nucleus of this "central question" was the relationship between Serbs and Croats.

Disputes between Serbian and Croatian nationalists raged over a broad variety of economic, cultural, and political issues. Almost invariably, these arguments were linked to one disagreement of transcending importance: the organization of the state. Serbs strongly supported the concept of a centralized state, but Croats demanded a federal, or even confederal, organization. Both standpoints were firmly rooted in their respective national histories; indeed, they reflected the seminal importance of these respective state forms in the integration and survival of distinctly Serbian and Croatian national identities.

Yugoslav leaders made various attempts to resolve the resulting Serb-Croat impasse, ranging from parliamentary coalitions to the imposition of royal dictatorship. The Sporazum (Agreement) of August 1939 was the most significant effort in the interwar period to resolve the stalemate by negotiation.²

¹Dennison I. Rusinow, "Yugoslav Domestic Developments," American Universities Field Staff Reports, 1978, no. 25:8.

²The role of Yugoslavia's other peoples in these developments deserves

Sporazum Cvetkovic-Macek is very important as a factual study of the topic; however, Boban's assessment of the Sporazum's failure is inadequate. His Marxist interpretation of the agreement as a mechanism for the retention of bourgeois class privilege ignores the essence of the Serb-Croat dispute: the national idea. It is this interpretive gap which the current work seeks to fill.

To this end, unpublished archival holdings of contemporary diplomatic documents from the British Foreign Office, German Auswärtiges Amt (Foreign Office), and the U.S. State Department have served as primary sources of material on the Sporazum. The great majority of these documents are despatches submitted by

more attention than can be devoted to it here. Their activities will only be addressed insofar as they bear directly upon the central theme.

³Ljubo Boban, Sporazum Cvetkovic-Macek (Belgrade: Institut društvenih nauka, 1965). (Translations provided by Dr. Maria Todorova.)

accredited diplomatic representatives in Belgrade and Zagreb. These reports are a treasure trove of factual and analytical information about the Yugoslav domestic situation, and also reflect a great deal about British, German, and American attitudes toward local developments.⁴

Published volumes of diplomatic correspondence such as Documents on German Foreign Policy and Foreign Relations of the United States afford broader perspectives on Axis and Allied policies involving Yugoslavia, as well as material directly related to the Sporazum. The Ciano Diaries: 1939-1943 and Ciano's Diplomatic Papers provide additional essential information about Italian (and German) intentions towards Yugoslavia.⁵

Contemporary periodical literature also furnishes valuable insights into the popular mood in Yugoslavia from 1939-1941. It also reflects as much, or even more, about the desires and aspirations of the country in which it originated. Above all, press reports provide a useful barometer of public fears and expectations in the stressful summer of 1939. The New York Times, Newsweek,

⁴British Foreign Office General Political Correspondence, PRO Class FO 371 (Southern Department: Yugoslavia, 1939-1941), Public Record Office, London; Auswärtiges Amt, British Foreign Office/ U. S. State Department German War Documents Project, (various departments: Yugoslavia, 1936-1941); Records of the Dept. of State, RG 59 (Internal Affairs of Yugoslavia, 1919-1941), National Archives, Washington, D. C.

⁵Auswärtiges Amt, Documents on German Foreign Policy, 1918-1945, ser. D, 11 vols. (Washington: U. S. G. P. O., 1949-60); U. S. State Department, Foreign Relations of the United States, (1939-1941), (Washington: U. S. G. P. O., 1956-1959); Galeazzo Ciano, The Ciano Diaries: 1939-1943, ed. Hugh Gibson (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1946); Malcolm Muggeridge, ed., Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, trans. Stuart Hood (London: Odhams Press, 1948).

and Time have proved most valuable in this regard. Journals such as Contemporary Review and Nineteenth Century and After provide useful insights into British interpretations of Yugoslav developments. An enlightening view of the German perspective emerges from the contemporary Viennese publication Nation und Staat (Nation and State), a journal devoted to the national question in European politics.⁶

Vladko Macek's memoir In the Struggle for Freedom possesses profound relevance to any study of the Serb-Croat agreement. Co-author of the Sporazum and leader of the Croatian Peasant Party since 1928, Macek was the most significant individual in the Croat national movement for eleven years prior to the accord. Of course, Macek's position made him vulnerable to all opponents of the Sporazum, whether Serb or Croat. Macek's interpretation of the agreement is thus colored by his need to defend his personal position, as well as by his Croatian nationalism. His memoir is extremely valuable for its inside view of a Croatian nationalist in the position of Yugoslav statesman. Additional memoirs which provide background relevant to the Sporazum are those of King Peter II and Sir Nevile Henderson.⁷

Primary sources and memoirs have been valuably supplemented by a variety of secondary historical works. Available secondary

⁶These and other periodical sources are listed in the bibliography.

⁷Vladko Macek, In the Struggle for Freedom, trans. Elizabeth and Stjepan Gazi (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, Publishers, 1957); Nevile Henderson, Water Under the Bridges (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1945); Peter II, King of Yugoslavia, A King's Heritage: The Memoirs of King Peter II of Yugoslavia (London: Cassell & Co., 1955). King Peter assumed the Yugoslav throne in 1941. Henderson was British Minister to Yugoslavia, 1929-1935.

sources are quantitatively and qualitatively adequate to provide the political, historical, and ideological background of the Serb-Croat controversy. Accordingly, selected monographic and survey literature has been used to establish the relevant historical context up to 1939.

A number of secondary sources are also of direct relevance to a study of the Sporazum, since they deal with important facets of its negotiation and implementation. A general historiographical survey is perhaps the most efficient means of commenting on their extent and utility. To facilitate this approach, it is useful to characterize them based on their differing emphases and points of view, while commenting in more detail on the most important works.

Jacob B. Hoptner's Yugoslavia in Crisis: 1934-1941 has proven the most valuable of these sources. The standard English-language work on this period of Yugoslav history, it addresses in well-documented detail the relationship between her foreign and domestic affairs. Hoptner's primary focus is on foreign policy, so his treatment of the Sporazum is not exhaustive; however, Yugoslavia in Crisis provides unique insights into the accord, its makers, and their concerns. Hoptner's thoroughly professional approach makes his work an invaluable yardstick of objectivity in a historiography fraught with bias.⁸

The First Yugoslavia, by Alex Dragnich, also proved very valuable. His fifteen-page survey of the Sporazum is possibly the most serviceable synthesis of the topic available in English.

⁸Jacob B. Hoptner, Yugoslavia in Crisis: 1934-1941 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1962).

Dragnich primarily bases his work upon Boban and several other secondary sources and memoirs published in Serbo-Croatian and provides a level of factual detail not otherwise accessible in English. Overall, Dragnich's survey is most useful as a source of information about the Sporazum, rather than as an in-depth analysis of its causes, effects, and outcomes. One must use The First Yugoslavia judiciously, however, for it is noticeably sympathetic to the Serbian viewpoint.⁹

The official Yugoslav view of the Sporazum is provided by Vladimir Dedijer's History of Yugoslavia. Dedijer castigates the agreement as a "division of Yugoslavia into spheres of interest between the Serbian and Croatian bourgeoisies [*sic*]," which "neglected the totality of the national question."¹⁰ Dedijer's perspective mirrors the official Soviet assessment of the Sporazum as a class-based, anti-democratic initiative. These surveys deal only briefly with the Sporazum, and their doctrinaire communist interpretations are of no real value in an analysis of Yugoslavia's national question.¹¹

⁹Alex Dragnich, The First Yugoslavia: Search for a Viable Political System (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983).

¹⁰Vladimir Dedijer, "Yugoslavia between Centralism and Federalism," in History of Yugoslavia, ed. Vladimir Dedijer et al., trans. Kordija Kveder (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974), 549.

¹¹V. K. Volkov, "Yugoslavia on the Eve of the Second World War: The Sporazum of August 26, 1939," in Istoriya Yugoslavii, vol. 2, ed. L. B. Valev et al. (Moscow: Academy of Sciences of the U.S.S.R., 1963), 170. (Translation provided by Dr. Maria Todorova.) Aleksa Djilas has recently published a non-doctrinaire interpretation of the Sporazum which nevertheless bears some similarities to these works. Essentially, he views the agreement as an undemocratic arrangement that hindered the resolution of the national question. (See Aleksa Djilas, The Contested

Outside of the official Marxist framework, one naturally finds a wider variety of interpretations of the Sporazum; however, these are commonly so brief as to constitute assertion rather than argument. Works published in the 1940s tend to view the agreement through the lenses of wartime allegiance or necessity. In the United States, this tendency is commonly manifested in an emphasis on Croatian culpability in the Sporazum's failure. M. W. Graham writes that "well-calculated" Croatian "extortion" resulted in the accord, which "opened the doors . . . to Axis connivance and conspiracy." J. S. Roucek also emphasizes Croatian dissatisfaction with the Sporazum, and the "seeds of internal dissension . . . carefully laid . . . by Nazi agents, particularly among a number of extremist Croats." Constantin Fotich, a Serb who served as Yugoslavia's Ambassador to the United States during the war, justifies Serbian reservations about the accord, while blaming Croatian extremism for its failure.¹²

Available British wartime treatments (and their lineal descendants) reflect the expertise of R. W. Seton-Watson, one of the foremost scholars of Yugoslav affairs. His essay on Yugoslavia's interwar development, prepared for British Naval Intelligence in

Country: Yugoslav Unity and Communist Revolution, 1919-1953 [Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1991], 128-35.)

¹²Malbone W. Graham, "Constitutional Development, 1914-1941," in Yugoslavia, ed. Robert J. Kerner (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1949), 132; Joseph S. Roucek, Balkan Politics: International Relations in No Man's Land (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1948), 105-09; Constantin Fotitch, The War We Lost: Yugoslavia's Tragedy and the Failure of the West (New York: Viking Press, 1948), 20-21. This trend continued into the 1950s, too. See Hammond, in Byrnes, ed. (New York, 1957).

1944, assesses the Sporazum as a missed opportunity for a true settlement. In Seton-Watson's opinion, Prince Paul's unrealistic insistence on separating national and constitutional issues was to blame. He also speculates that the regent feared a negative Axis reaction to any truly democratic settlement, which alone could have resolved Yugoslavia's problems. Seton-Watson's criticism of the regent's policies is consistent with his prewar analyses, but is also reminiscent of official British disapproval of Paul's 1941 accommodation of the Axis.¹³

Paul's role in the Sporazum is treated much more sympathetically by Balfour and Mackay in their biography of the prince regent. As its title implies, Paul of Yugoslavia: Britain's Maligned Friend is written with the aim of rehabilitating the prince's reputation in the West. The authors assess the Sporazum as the "supreme achievement of Paul's regency," which offered the "first . . . hope of real unity to the Yugoslav people." Serbian political disunity and the activities of "right wing Serbs" were the main causes of the Sporazum's failure to promote unity in Yugoslavia, while the war "prevented [the accord's] consolidation."¹⁴

¹³ [R. W. Seton-Watson and R. G. D. Laffan], Jugoslavia: History, Peoples and Administration, vol. 2 of Geographical Handbook Series (Naval Intelligence Division, 1944), 183-84. See also R. W. Seton-Watson, in Clissold, ed. (Cambridge, 1966); Lasic (Washington, 1976); Palmer (London, 1970). The most detailed and useful presentation of this general viewpoint is presented by R. W. Seton-Watson's son Hugh, also a distinguished scholar of Yugoslav affairs. See Hugh Seton-Watson, Eastern Europe Between the Wars: 1918-1941, 3rd ed. (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1962), 236-41.

¹⁴ Neil Balfour and Sally Mackay, Paul of Yugoslavia: Britain's Maligned

Predictably, Croatian nationalist historiography has consistently interpreted the Sporazum in terms of Serbian guilt and Croatian aspirations. Gregoric's So Endete Jugoslawien (Thus Ended Yugoslavia), published in 1943, takes a page from contemporary Nazi rhetoric; he portrays the Sporazum as the inspiration of a mysterious Serbian Freemason conspiracy, intent on furthering French interests! An Ustasa (Croatian fascist) perspective is offered by Stjepan Hefer's 1955 polemic, Croatian Struggle for Freedom and Statehood. Hefer excoriates the accord as a temporary act, unsanctioned by parliament. Its concessions were simply a ruse meant to "paralyze the Croatian national demands for freedom and independence and morally prepare Great-Serbian Yugoslavia for war."¹⁵

Writers such as Gazi, Kiszling, and Kamber have presented Croatian nationalist arguments in a more moderate tone in the several decades since the war. The most recent available view from the Croatian nationalist perspective was written in 1981, by a

Friend (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1980), 182-83, 188-89. Though Prince Paul was Balfour's father-in-law, the work is more than an apologia. Balfour's most important secondary source is Hoptner's Yugoslavia in Crisis: 1934-1941. Hoptner's main theme is the explanation and justification of Paul's foreign policy, which was often grossly misinterpreted by the Allies as reflecting the Regent's sympathy for the Axis. Hoptner criticizes the Serb nationalists whose coup derailed this policy, as does Balfour.

¹⁵Danilo Gregoric, So endete Jugoslawien (Leipzig: Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag, 1943), 60-70 (translations mine); Stjepan Hefer, Croatian Struggle for Freedom and Statehood, trans. Andrija Ilic (Argentina: Croatian Information Service, [1955]), 127-29. Hefer served in the wartime Ustasa government, and ends his book with a declaration of loyalty to its leader, Ante Pavelic. See also Dresler (Essen, 1942) for a wartime German author's view of the Serbs as the sole culprit in the Sporazum's failure.

historian and ex-Yugoslav Army General who has since achieved world renown as President of Croatia: Franjo Tudjman. His assessment of the accord is purely particularistic--it was "too late and did not go far enough in satisfying the Croatian demands." Tudjman also castigates the "representatives of greater-Serbian policies," who "preferred . . . to bring about the crisis and collapse of the state rather than agree to its federalization."¹⁶

A more useful treatment from a moderate Croatian standpoint is provided by Jozo Tomasevich in his scholarly 1975 work The Chetniks. Though Tomasevich deals only briefly with the Sporazum, he provides some thoughtful analysis. Branko Peselj, an associate of Vladko Macek, studies several aspects of the accord in some detail in his 1971 article "Serbo-Croatian Agreement of 1939 and American Foreign Policy." Very extensive quotations of contemporary American diplomatic despatches form the bulk of the article, but Peselj also provides interesting constitutional and political analysis. His work additionally contains English translations of the Sporazum's complete text, as well as translations of its implementing decrees.¹⁷

Stevan K. Pavlowitch presents a moderate defense of the Serbian response to the Sporazum in several of his works; the most useful of these is his 1971 survey Yugoslavia. A well-balanced view

¹⁶Franjo Tudjman, Nationalism in Contemporary Europe (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1981), 141. See also Gazi (New York, 1973); Kamber (New York, 1961); Kiszling (Graz, 1956).

¹⁷Jozo Tomasevich, The Chetniks (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1975), 22-25; Branko M. Peselj, "Serbo-Croatian Agreement of 1939 and American Foreign Policy," Journal of Croatian Studies 11-12 (1970-71): 3-82.

of the background to the accord is given by Mima Nedelcovych in the journal Serbian Studies. Her 1981 article "The Serb-Croat Controversy: Events Leading to the Sporazum of 1939" is an interesting survey of the agreement's origins.¹⁸

The bulk of monographs and survey works which treat aspects of East European, Balkan, or Yugoslav history commonly address the Sporazum in one of several ways. One critical view asserts that the accord did too little and came too late to solve Yugoslavia's national problem. Perhaps the most colorfully simplistic of these formulations is offered by Brogan's Eastern Europe: 1939-1989, which comments: "By then, such reforms were a matter of rearranging the deck chairs on the Lusitania."¹⁹ Others describe the Sporazum as giving the Croats too few concessions to satisfy them, but too many to suit the Serbs.²⁰ A third group tends to emphasize the importance of the war in thwarting the Sporazum's development.²¹ Many other works briefly mention the agreement,

¹⁸Stevan K. Pavlowitch, Yugoslavia (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 97-100. See also Pavlowitch (New York, 1985); and (London, 1988); Mima S. Nedelcovych, "The Serb-Croat Controversy: Events Leading to the Sporazum of 1939," Serbian Studies I, no. 3 (1981): 3-29.

¹⁹Patrick Brogan, Eastern Europe, 1939-1989: The Fifty Years War (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 1990), 151. See also Heppell and Singleton (New York, 1961); Petrovich, in Grothusen, ed. (Göttingen, 1975).

²⁰Lendvai (New York, 1969); Auty (London, 1965); Hoffman and Neal (New York, 1962); Rudzinski, in Byrnes, ed. (New York, 1957).

²¹Jelavich (Cambridge, 1983); Singleton (New York, 1976); Polonsky (London, 1975); Furtak (Hamburg, 1975); Edwards (New York, 1971); Pattee (Milwaukee, 1953); Newman (London, 1952); Hanc (New York, 1942).

or summarize its provisions, without providing even the most meager assessment of its strengths or weaknesses.²²

Surveys by Wolff, Rothschild, and Vucinich provide more detailed and balanced accounts of the Sporazum. They analyze some of the situation's many complexities, albeit briefly, and do not overemphasize any single component.²³

In the historiography of the Sporazum, the most clearly demonstrable patterns belong to the interpretations of the Marxists and the nationalists. The only apparent chronological development is the "rehabilitation" of the Croats and the prince regent from the war-related stereotyping of the 1940s. Generally speaking, the only thing resembling historiographical debate is that between partisans of the respective Serbian and Croatian national views.

The outstanding characteristic of the historiography as a whole is its brief and fragmentary treatment of the Sporazum. The great mass of works provide a few salient facts about the agreement and assess it as a failure for one or several reasons. Other works provide more detailed and meaningful treatment of important aspects of the Sporazum, but only Boban undertakes

²²These works are too numerous to mention here, but are included in the bibliography.

²³Robert Lee Wolff, The Balkans in Our Time (New York: W. W. Norton, 1967), 125-26; Joseph Rothschild, East Central Europe between the Two World Wars (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1974), 259-62; Wayne S. Vucinich, "Interwar Yugoslavia," in Contemporary Yugoslavia: Twenty Years of Socialist Experiment, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1969), 3-6. (See also Stavrianos [New York, 1958].)

to analyze it thoroughly within the overall national, international, and historical context.

The underlying reason for the uniformly brief treatment of the Sporazum is the simple fact that it failed. Though the various sources often emphasize different reasons for its failure, they all agree on the final outcome. The settlement of 1939 did not result in the fundamental reorganization of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, nor did it resolve the Serb-Croat dispute. The postwar Communist regime instituted a federal system of state organization which owed nothing to the 1939 agreement, thus apparently consigning the Sporazum to the status of a historical blind alley.

In view of Yugoslavia's ongoing disintegration, however, it is perhaps time to reexamine the Sporazum to see what perspectives it offers on the history of Serb-Croat relations. The commonly-offered explanations of the Sporazum's failure are unsatisfying at best, and downright misleading at worst. The agreement did not fail because it gave the Croats too little or too much, nor because of Prince Paul's anti-democratic nature or timidity. It was not simply sabotaged by Croat or Serb nationalist extremists, either. The intervention of the war was perhaps least of all to blame for the Sporazum's failure to resolve the Serb-Croat impasse.

All of these factors were indeed, in an immediate sense, at least partial causes of the failure. But perhaps they are more properly viewed as effects of the underlying cause: the respective Serbian and Croatian national ideas, as they existed in 1939, had fundamentally conflicting goals which defied reconciliation. The

intent of this work is to show how this intricate pattern of causes and effects doomed the very agreement it made necessary.

CHAPTER 1

THE NATURE OF THE DISPUTE: SERB - CROAT RELATIONS TO 1939

The Sporazum of August 1939 represented Yugoslavia's attempt to resolve its long-standing "Croatian question." This question--or rather complex of questions--had prevented the state's internal consolidation since its inception as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes in 1918, and clearly threatened its ability to offer a cohesive defense if attacked. Broadly defined, the Croatian question comprised the totality of Serb-Croat relations by 1939, as the struggle between Yugoslavia's two dominant nations manifested itself in almost every aspect of cultural, economic and political life.

This bewildering variety of divergencies reflected, and reinforced, the essence of the Croatian question: the conflict between Serbian and Croatian ideas of state organization. The Serbian demand for a centralized state and Croatian resistance to this principle reflected issues of existential importance in the differing historical contexts of their respective national developments. Despite significant elements of ideological and historical commonality which marked their national pasts, no compromise was found possible on this issue. The political and military exigencies of 1918 made unification the only real solution, but the divergent concepts of state organization prevented the establishment of a truly consensual common state.

The resulting Serb-Croat frictions completely dislocated Yugoslavia's political life until the Second World War. The mutual distrust engendered thereby necessitated the Sporazum, but also gravely reduced its chances of success. A brief analysis of salient developments before 1939 provides the historical context indispensable to an understanding of the Serb-Croat dispute, and the accord which vainly sought to settle it.

The Serbian national idea had its roots in the struggle against Ottoman rule, which reached crisis proportions toward the end of the eighteenth century. Bands of Serbs revolted against the depredations of janissaries, whom the Sultan of the decaying empire could no longer control. In 1804 the rebellious activity exploded into widespread revolution, motivated primarily by considerations of simple survival; however, the support provided by Serbs from neighboring territories bespoke a nascent feeling of national community. After years of fighting, foreign intervention, and reconciliation, Serbia achieved autonomous status in 1830.¹

The establishment of this Serbian state entity marked a major turning point in the development of the Serb national idea. Under the Ottoman millet system of confessional organization, nationality had

¹Charles Jelavich and Barbara Jelavich, The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920 (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1977), 26-37. (Hereafter cited as "National States.") The revolt was centered in the Sumadija. Serbs from Southern Hungary (the Vojvodina), Bosnia, Hercegovina, and Montenegro helped the rebels. See Dimitrije Djordjevic, "The Idea of Yugoslav Unity in the Nineteenth Century," in The Creation of Yugoslavia: 1914-1918, ed. Dimitrije Djordjevic (Santa Barbara: Clio Books, 1980), 7-8; Michael Boro Petrovich, A History of Modern Serbia: 1804-1918, vol. 1 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 21, 37-38, and 42-43.

not been a meaningful category.² The Serbian Orthodox Church was granted broad administrative control over its adherents, however, making it the "central integrating factor in the phase of primitive [early] ideological nationalism."³ But the emergence of a secular Serbian political unit in 1830 brought in its train a new definition of national identity which transcended religion, while the state itself replaced the church as the central integrative element in Serb nationalism. Orthodoxy and the church were reintegrated ideologically and institutionally into the modern Serbian state idea, however, and thus continued to play a significant, if no longer dominant, role.⁴

The development of a modern ideological nationalism, as opposed to the sense of ethnic community fostered by the Orthodox millet, was spurred by Vuk Karadzic. He was inspired by Johann Gottfried von Herder's conception of the nation as a culturally- and linguistically-defined entity. Accordingly, Karadzic undertook wide-ranging philological efforts to establish a cultural basis for the Serbian national idea. His most notable contribution was the establishment of the stokavian dialect as the hallmark of Serbdom.

²Peter F. Sugar, Southeastern Europe under Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804 (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1977), 44-47.

³Wolf Dietrich Behschnitt, Nationalismus bei Serben und Kroaten 1830-1914: Analyse und Typologie der nationalen Ideologie (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1980), 243. (All translations mine.) Banac, Djordjevic, and Petrovich also stress the role of the Serbian Orthodox church in maintaining a sense of Serb identity throughout the centuries of Ottoman rule. Banac and Petrovich additionally emphasize the importance of the liturgy and epic poetry as operative mechanisms. (See Ivo Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics [Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1984], 65-68; Djordjevic, 7; Petrovich, 10-16.)

⁴Behschnitt, 244.

The linguistic frontiers drawn by this method corresponded rather closely to the eventual boundaries of Yugoslavia, extending far beyond the contemporary Serbian state and its small territory surrounding Belgrade. Karadzic rejected religion as the determining factor for nationality, observing that confessional differences were considered irrelevant by the German and Magyar nations, respectively. In his opinion, the Moslems in Bosnia and the Catholics to the west and north spoke the Serbian language, thus they were clearly Serbs; he professed amazement that they identified themselves otherwise.⁵

Serbian statesman Ilija Garasanin, a key figure in Serbian political life for some thirty years after 1842, bridged the gap between Karadzic's cultural initiatives and a political program of Serbian expansion. His Nacertanije (Memorandum) of 1844 espoused the creation of a true nation-state as Serbia's mission; in other words, the state should work to expand its territory to coincide with Serbian demographic limits. The Serbian state played the pivotal role within the framework of Garasanin's conception. Depending upon the exigencies of the international situation, the state could conduct cultural propaganda offensives in its irredenta, or provide support to conspiratorial groups who sought to prepare the way for liberation. Alternatively, the state could utilize direct

⁵Behschnitt, 65-73; Banac, 80-81. Karadzic standardized the Serbian language and grammar on the basis of the Cyrillic alphabet, as well as collecting folk songs and describing national customs. His efforts began as early as 1814; Serbia standardized his reforms as the official written language in 1868. His work "Srbi svi i svuda" (Serbs: All and Everywhere), written in 1836 and published in 1849, expounded his theory equating the stokavian dialect with Serb national identity.

military force to liberate Serbs in neighboring territories.⁶ After the unification of Italy, Garasanin and Serbian nationalists consciously adopted Cavour and Piedmont as individual and collective role models.⁷

The Nacertanije foresaw the annexation of Bosnia and Hercegovina as the first step towards eventual unification of all Serbs. Although Garasanin was prepared to recognize freedom of religion for the Moslem and Catholic inhabitants of these territories, they must in turn accept the fundamental principles of the Serbian state. Specifically, these included the Serbian dynasty, laws, state institutions, and the principle of national unity. In Garasanin's opinion, Bosnia and Hercegovina were populated by Serbs, and must be fully integrated into Serbia.⁸

Garasanin accepted the principle of linguistic nationhood championed by Karadzic,⁹ but he introduced a further justification for the expansion of Serbia: historic rights. He believed the fabled Serbian Empire of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries provided historic justification for the existence of the new state, as well as for its expansion to the borders of Serbdom. Unlike Karadzic, however, Garasanin did not specifically redefine Croats as Serbs--

⁶Behschnitt, 54-65.

⁷Petrovich, 316.

⁸Behschnitt, 54-65. Garasanin planned operations of various sorts in Bulgaria, Montenegro, northern Albania, Srijem, the Backa and the Banat, apparently envisioning the integration of all or parts of these territories into Serbia. Only in the case of Bosnia and Hercegovina was annexation expressly intended, however. (Behschnitt, 57, 65.)

⁹Banac, 83.

except in the case of Bosnia--nor did he plan to absorb Croatia-Slavonia into Serbia.¹⁰

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Serbian nationalism was a dynamic, expansionist force. Its sword was the young Serbian state itself; historic right and linguistic nationhood comprised its shield. Orthodoxy and the struggle against Ottoman rule were its heritage. Few Serbs were interested in the concepts of South Slavic reciprocity which were gaining ground among Croat intellectuals.¹¹

In its earliest stages, Croatian national feeling arose from attempts to combat Hungarian linguistic nationalism, itself a response to centralizing measures instituted by Joseph II of Austria.¹² No standard Croatian language or orthography existed at the time, so Croatian resistance to the introduction of the Magyar language in the Sabor (Diet) in 1791 was limited to insisting upon the retention of Latin. These efforts were initially successful, but Hungarian hegemonism assumed other forms: in 1827, the Magyar language became a required subject in Croatian schools.¹³

¹⁰Behschnitt, 57, 65. The Nacertanije was Garasanin's "Serbianized" version of a plan prepared by Frantisek Zach, a Czech. Zach's formulation addressed the situation in terms of South Slavic reciprocity. (For details of Garasanin's modifications to Zach's concept, see Behschnitt, 54-65; Banac, 83-84.)

¹¹Banac, 79.

¹²Ivo J. Lederer, "Nationalism and the Yugoslavs," in Nationalism in Eastern Europe, ed. Peter F. Sugar and Ivo J. Lederer (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1969), 409-10. Croatia was bound to Hungary since 1102, and to Austria since 1527.

¹³Elinor Murray Despalatovic, Ljudevit Gai and the Illyrian Movement (Boulder: East European Quarterly, 1975), 17-18.

In reaction to the threat which Magyar represented to the survival of Croatia's vernacular dialects, Ljudevit Gaj assumed the role of cultural awakener similar to that of Karadzic in Serbia. Gaj began collecting Croatian folk tales and poems, as well as working to establish a standard orthography and language.¹⁴ By the mid-1830s, Gaj had become the center of the "Illyrian" movement; this appellation explicitly recalled Napoleon's short-lived (1809-1813) Illyrian Provinces, which combined parts of Croatia and Dalmatia into a single administrative unit. The Illyrians emphasized the cultural unity of all South Slavs, and Gaj's standardization of a modified stokavian dialect was a conscious effort to foster this unity.¹⁵ Politically, the Illyrian program made little headway in its attempt to unite the South Slavs. It also held little appeal for Serbia, since it was an essentially defensive program against Magyarization within the Habsburg milieu. Its primary political contribution was in "placing the issue of unity on the southern Slav agenda."¹⁶

In the 1860s, two opposing currents developed in Croatian nationalism. The Yugoslavism of Bishop Josip Strossmayer and Franjo Racki closely resembled Gaj's Illyrian movement, stressing

¹⁴Despalatovic, 42-44. Karadzic's collections of Serbian folk poetry were Gaj's direct inspiration to collect Croatian poems.

¹⁵Banac, 78; Lederer, 414-15. The kajkavian dialect was most common among Croats, but Gaj renounced it due to its minimal potential as a nationally integrating factor; stokavian speakers were, after all, numerically superior. His Latin orthography differed from the Serbian Cyrillic, however, reflecting Croatia's proximity to Slovenia and Slavonia, whose Slavic populations used the Latin alphabet. (See Despalatovic, 21-22, 46-47.)

¹⁶Lederer, 414-15; Banac, 79.

South Slav cultural and spiritual unity on the basis of a common language. In Strossmayer's conception, Serbs and Croats were viewed as two "branches," or "tribes," of the same people. Common history, blood, language, and soul bound them together. The Yugoslav Academy was founded in 1866 to emphasize and promote cultural unity, while the National Party pursued the movement's political goal of a South Slav entity within a federative Habsburg Empire. In the interim, Strossmayer and Racki worked for the consolidation of Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia into a Croatian national unit which could resist Magyarization.¹⁷

Ante Starcevic and Eugen Kvaternik expounded a radical Pan-Croat ideology which differed fundamentally from the moderate, culturally-based national programs of the Yugoslav movements. Starcevic's Party of [Croat State] Right¹⁸ was the mechanism used to advance a political agenda based on bitter hatred of the Habsburg oppressor and a fervent belief that "nationality is a holy thing." Cultural definitions of nationality held little attraction for Starcevic, who based his argumentation primarily on historical right--a concept he understood specifically as state right. In turn, the legitimacy of state right rested upon valid legal status and the support of the nation itself.¹⁹

¹⁷Banac, 89-91; Behschnitt, 164-67. Strossmayer's Yugoslav concept also strongly stressed unity with the Slovenes, and somewhat less so with the Bulgarians. ("Jugoslav" translates as "South Slav," thus it has been used since the 19th century to describe movements or organizations with a multinational South Slavic character.)

¹⁸Banac, 88.

¹⁹Behschnitt, 176-78. Croat nationalists commonly traced their history

In Starcevic's opinion, Croatia's subordination to Hungary after the Ausgleich was contrary to the treaties of 1527 and 1712--which bound Croatia to the Austrian crown--and was therefore invalid. In an 1878 address to Kaiser Franz Josef, Starcevic demanded the establishment of an independent Croatian state, which would remain in a purely personal union with the Austrian crown. The territory of this proposed state encompassed most of the western Balkans, to include Bosnia and Hercegovina. For in Starcevic's eyes, only Croats lived in the territories bounded by Macedonia and Germany, the Danube River and the Adriatic Sea.²⁰ He thought of Slovenes as simply "highland Croats," while Serbs were considered "Orthodox Croats" of a servile, lower order.²¹

The Yugoslavism of Gaj and Strossmayer, and the Pan-Croat program espoused by Starcevic, varied drastically in their approach to many aspects of the national question. But by the 1860s, they had served to complete the fundamental processes of national "awakening" and integration.²² The Nagodba (Settlement) of 1868,

as a constitutionally recognized "political nation" back to the Personal Union with Hungary in 1102. This rather pedantic claim blurred the reality of centuries of foreign domination, but the resulting "constitutional fiction of a Croatian state" served to legitimate Croatian claims to nationhood based upon state right. (See Lederer, 409.) For an example of the Croatian nationalist perspective, see Vladko Macek, In the Struggle for Freedom, trans. Elizabeth and Stjepan Gazi (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, Publishers, 1957), 24. For a scholarly example of a modified Croatian perspective, see Stanko Guldescu, "Political History to 1526," in Croatia: Land, People, Culture vol. 1, ed. Francis H. Eterovich and Christopher Spalatin (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1964), 103-4.

²⁰Behschnitt, 178, 181. Bosnia and Hercegovina were occupied by Austria after 1878, and were thus fair game for Starcevic's aspirations.

²¹Banac, 87-89; Behschnitt, 181-84.

²²Djordjevic, 6-7. At this point, however, national awareness was largely

in which Hungary regulated its political relationship to Croatia, quashed hopes of an independent Croatian unit in the Habsburg Empire, however. The Nagodba provided the appearance of Croatian statehood, but the Ban (Governor) was responsible to Budapest, and the Sabor was assigned only limited domestic competencies. Croatia remained financially dependent upon the Magyar-dominated parliament in Budapest, and had no jurisdiction over foreign affairs or defense. Croat nationalists from Strossmayer to Starcevic viewed the Nagodba as little short of a betrayal of Croatian rights.²³ Fifty years later, however, many would long for the de jure recognition of Croatian state right it represented.

Claims to Bosnia and Hercegovina provided additional common ground between Strossmayer's National Party and Starcevic's Party of Right. Starcevic denied the very existence of Serbs in these territories; Strossmayer and Racki accepted the existence of "genetic" Serbs there, but considered them subsumed in the Croatian "political nation," which had the only valid historical claim to the land.²⁴ These arguments clashed fundamentally with Serbian policies, which saw the annexation of Bosnia-Hercegovina as the first step toward fulfilling the destiny of the Serbian nation and state.

confined to the social-political elite. National consciousness was not yet a significant factor for the peasantry. (See Behschnitt, 240.)

²³Lederer, 421; Banac, 91-92; Jelavich and Jelavich, National States, 253. The Croat deputies who agreed to the Nagodba were Magyarones, whose program favored continued close relations with Budapest.

²⁴Banac, 91.

Bosnia-Hercegovina was the primary bone of contention between the competing Serbian and Croatian national programs in the nineteenth century. The struggle was waged with the full arsenal of ideological weapons, precipitating an "avalanche of 'scientific' treatises on the historical, linguistic, ethnic, religious, [and] anthropological 'facts' involved."²⁵ The Serbian state was also prepared to use the sword as a means of staking its claim; in the aftermath of Bosnian and Bulgarian revolts against Ottoman rule in 1875-76, the Serbian Army marched into Bosnia. Bloodily defeated after months of fighting, Serbia was forced to seek an armistice with the Sultan's forces. In 1878, Serbian aspirations towards Bosnia were temporarily dashed by the Treaty of Berlin, which provided for Austrian military occupation of Bosnia-Hercegovina. The settlement established Serbia as a fully independent state, however, officially terminating her status as an Ottoman vassal.²⁶

Bosnia remained the focus of Serb and Croat nationalist passions, reflecting the growing realization that its possession by either party would make it the dominant factor in South Slav politics.²⁷ Khuen-Hedervary, Ban of Croatia, fanned the flames with his pro-Serbian policies. Khuen, who "considered himself more of a Magyar than a Croat,"²⁸ successfully sought to weaken the anti-Hungarian potential of the Habsburg South Slav movement by

²⁵Lederer, 425.

²⁶Jelavich and Jelavich, National States, 143-45, 153.

²⁷Lederer, 426; Jelavich and Jelavich, National States, 254.

²⁸Macek, 30, 33; Jelavich and Jelavich, National States, 254-55.

fomenting dissension among its component peoples. By the 1880s, Starcevic's militantly anti-Serb Party of Right became the dominant factor in Croatian national politics, and the Yugoslav idea was gravely weakened. Bloody clashes between Serbs and Croats occurred in Zagreb and other cities during the last decade of the nineteenth century, illustrating the increasing radicalization of relations.²⁹

The year 1903 witnessed the beginnings of a dramatic improvement in Serb-Croat relations, however. In Serbia, army officers murdered King Alexander Obrenovic, whose scandalous personal affairs were considered a disgrace to the country, and replaced him with King Peter Karadjordjevic.³⁰ The new sovereign, whose forebear Karadjordje Petrovic was the fabled leader of the 1804 revolt, rejected the Austrophile policies introduced under the Obrenovic dynasty in 1881-1882.³¹ Khuen-Hedervary was also replaced as Ban of Croatia in 1903, removing a major source of Serb-Croat friction in the Habsburg lands. Hungarian demands upon Vienna precipitated wholesale changes in the Dual Monarchy in the

²⁹Some extremists in Belgrade, provoked by the violence in Croatia, demanded "a war of extermination between the two South Slav peoples." (See Jelavich and Jelavich, National States, 254-55.)

³⁰ Ibid., 190-91.

³¹When Austria-Hungary occupied Bosnia-Hercegovina in 1878, Serbian expansionism in that direction was effectively blocked. The Serbian government signed political and economic treaties which opened Austrian markets to Serbian agricultural products, and ensured Austrian support for Serbian expansion into Macedonia and the elevation of Serbia to a kingdom. In return, Serbia undertook to sign no political treaties with other governments without Austrian approval, and promised not to tolerate intrigues against the Dual Monarchy on Serbian soil or in Bosnia-Hercegovina. (See Jelavich and Jelavich, National States, 186-87.)

same year. All of these events combined to clear the way for a resurgence in political activity among the South Slavs.³²

The Yugoslav idea, which had suffered much damage from the Bosnian controversies of the late 19th century, began to revive among the Dual Monarchy's Serbs and Croats; its primary exponents were the youth and intelligentsia. In 1905, Frano Supilo, a Dalmatian Croat, formulated the "New Course"; this program identified German eastward expansion as the main threat to the South Slavs, and called for unity to oppose it. In return for recognition of their Serbian nationality, the Serbs of the empire agreed to support the New Course program of unifying Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia under Austria. The eventual goal was the unification of all South Slavs. On the basis of this program, the Croat-Serb Coalition was born; it quickly became the majority party among the South Slavs of the empire, and retained this position until the outbreak of war in 1914.³³

The Coalition's doctrine of narodno jedinstvo (national unity) recalled the unitarist Yugoslav traditions of Gaj and Strossmayer. Like its ideological forebears, however, it did not completely renounce the concepts of state right and Croat nationhood.³⁴

³²Banac, 97; Jelavich and Jelavich, National States, 255; Lederer, 426-27.

³³Lederer, 427; Jelavich and Jelavich, National States, 255-56; Banac, 97-99. Due to the limited franchise in Croatian lands, the peasantry was not strongly represented in the Coalition.

³⁴Banac, 98-99. Narodno jedinstvo is sometimes translated as "national oneness," because it implied a common identity and the merging of South Slav nations as a natural historical phenomenon. It was not simply a political act of federation, or "unity."

Narodno jedinstvo and similarly unitary Yugoslav ideologies in the pre-1914 era were largely limited to South Slav intellectuals of the Habsburg Empire--especially Croats--who developed these concepts as a "rational solution to specific national interests attainable through the unity of goals." As a numerically and politically weak entity, faced with an aggressive Magyarization program, their best hope lay in defining themselves as part of a larger national entity.³⁵

The ethnic similarities between Croats and Serbs, as well as their overlapping settlement patterns, provided the practical basis for narodno jedinstvo theories. Indeed, demographic heterogeneity went far towards making Yugoslavism a necessity for Croats. Since large numbers of Serbs lived in the empire, they had to be accounted for in the national program by negation (Starcevic's "Orthodox Croats") or integration (Yugoslavism). Only the latter approach offered any possibility of willing cooperation by the Serbs themselves. Nevertheless, Yugoslav ideologies popular with the empire's Croats shared a common core of specifically Croatian national goals which most adherents were not prepared to renounce.³⁶

The situation was somewhat less ambiguous to the south, where the Serbian state championed the cause of the Serbian nation. In the Kingdom of Serbia, Yugoslav ideologies which implied any diminution of Serb nationhood were anathema.³⁷ Since the era of

³⁵Djordjevic, 3-7; Behschnitt, 231-32, 234-35; Lederer, 419, 427.

³⁶Behschnitt, 231-32, 234-35; Lederer, 398, 427.

³⁷Behschnitt, 236; Djordjevic, 8-10; Jelavich and Jelavich, National

Garasanin, Serbian eyes had remained fixed upon their mission: the unification of all Serbs.

This vision of the state as the "Piedmont of Serbdom" laid the foundation for a Serbian version of Yugoslavism. Increasingly, Serbian intellectuals began to popularize the idea that Serbia's holy mission included the liberation and unification of all South Slavs, especially those subject to the hated Habsburgs. Serbia's leaders gradually started to turn their thoughts towards Croatian and Slovenian lands.³⁸ Fatefully, however, this evolving concept saw Yugoslavism as a mechanism for the absorption of South Slavs who lived in territories containing Serbs, and did not differentiate between the interests of Serbia and the wider "Yugoslav" community.³⁹

In the decade following 1903, agitation based upon the burgeoning Yugoslav ideologies accelerated rapidly, especially among the politically active youth and intelligentsia. The object of much of this pressure was the Habsburg Empire, which blocked Serbian aspirations towards Bosnia, and also stymied the desires of its own South Slav subjects for a distinct political entity. The so-called "Pig War"⁴⁰ of 1906-1911 and Austria's 1908 annexation of States, 259; Banac, 110.

³⁸Michael Boro Petrovich, A History of Modern Serbia: 1804-1918, vol. 2 (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), 606-07.

³⁹Djordjevic, 8-10; Banac, 110.

⁴⁰Barbara Jelavich, History of the Balkans, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), 33. The moniker "Pig War" connoted the economic warfare Austria-Hungary waged against Serbia in order to undermine her plan for "virtual economic union" with Bulgaria by 1915. Serbian exports of livestock to the empire were crucial to the Balkan Kingdom's economy, so the embargo on this trade was a

Bosnia-Hercegovina grievously damaged relations between Serbia and the empire, generating a confrontational atmosphere which had dangerous military and revolutionary implications. The annexation of Bosnia provoked a firestorm of public anger in Belgrade, where huge crowds "demanded war in a kind of suicidal frenzy."⁴¹ The Serbian government had to yield peacefully to Austria-Hungary's obviously superior power, but the episode stoked Serbian nationalism to new heights of passion. Yugoslav sentiments waxed still stronger among the empire's politically aware subjects, who increasingly looked to Serbia as their champion against a regime which was strengthening, rather than relaxing, its grip on its South Slav peoples.⁴²

Serbia's smashing successes in the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 brought her new territories in Macedonia, Kosovo, and the Sandzak, while increasing her population from 2.9 million to 4.4 million. Achieved at the expense of the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria, these acquisitions greatly boosted Serbia's prestige among her Habsburg significant matter. Hence the appellation "Pig War." (Hereafter cited as "Balkans: Twentieth Century.")

⁴¹Alex N. Dragnich, Serbia, Nikola Pasic, and Yugoslavia (New Brunswick: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1974), 95. As Dragnich summarizes public opinion in Belgrade, the annexation was seen as a threat to Serbia's very existence; better that Serbia fall gloriously on the battlefield than slowly and shamefully. (Hereafter cited as "Pasic.")

⁴²Narodna Odbrana (National Defense) and Ujedinjenje ili smrt (Unification or Death) were the two most sensational offspring of the Annexation Crisis. Both were radical nationalist organizations which dedicated themselves to the liberation of Serbdom. Ujedinjenje ili smrt, composed of Serbian army officers who despised the civilian government as weak and cowardly, was later directly implicated in the 1914 Sarajevo assassination. It was commonly known as the "Black Hand." (See Petrovich, 606-11.)

brethren.⁴³ Serbian Prime Minister Nikola Pasic, leader of the powerful Radical Party since 1880, now thought the time ripe to consider Serbia's future mission: the liberation and unification of the Habsburg Croats and Slovenes.⁴⁴

By the eve of the Great War, the Serbian national idea had fully matured. It possessed all the major hallmarks of nineteenth century romantic nationalism: a linguistically-defined nation whose existence was justified by historic rights, and whose past and future glory demanded the unification of Serbdom into a nation-state.⁴⁵ The existence of the independent Serbian state, which deliberately integrated this messianic ideology into its policy, provided a mechanism for the fulfillment of national aspirations which had no counterpart in Slovenian or Croatian lands. Serbia's leaders began to consider filling this role, but they failed to face the national implications of the multinational state this would create.

In contrast to Serbia's relatively recent and limited interest in Yugoslavism, Croat emphasis on narodno jedinstvo in 1914 arose within a continuum begun some eighty years earlier by Gaj and the Illyrianists. However, even Gaj had not intended to completely

⁴³Petrovich, 607.

⁴⁴Alex Dragnich, "The Serbian Government, the Army, and the Unification of the Yugoslavs," in The Creation of Yugoslavia: 1914-1918, ed. Dimitrije Djordjevic (Santa Barbara: Clio Books, 1980), 39.

⁴⁵For discussions of romantic nationalism, see Hans Kohn, Nationalism: Its Meaning and History (Princeton: Van Nostrand and Co., 1955), 30-35; Peter F. Sugar, "External and Domestic Roots of Eastern European Nationalism," in Nationalism in Eastern Europe, ed. Peter F. Sugar and Ivo J. Lederer (Seattle: Univ. of Washington Press, 1969), 17-19, 40-45.

sacrifice the specifically Croatian national idea. On the contrary, he and his ideological successors Strossmayer and Racki all shared a sense of Croatian individuality which they fought to define and preserve. Faced with the Magyar and German threats, Yugoslavism was the best means to this end; however, narodno jedinstvo made Croats vulnerable to Serbianization. Croat nationalists countered this threat with the argument of historic state right, for they did not intend to exchange one master for another.

In very broad outline, these were the main currents of Serb and Croat nationalist thought prior to 1914. The ethnic similarity and partially overlapping settlement patterns of the two peoples underlay strong currents of mutual attraction, but the attraction arose from different assumptions and goals. Well before the outbreak of the World War, military circles in Austria-Hungary identified the unification tendencies of South Slav nationalisms as the primary threat to the empire,⁴⁶ but no consensus actually existed between the two peoples on the form such unification might take.

Indeed, it must be stressed that the masses of both nationalities cared little about political unification with each other. Serbs widely shared the goals of liberating Bosnia-Hercegovina and Macedonia, because they believed them to be ethnically and historically Serbian. The liberation of Croats and Slovenes was a

⁴⁶Army Chief of Staff Conrad von Hötzendorf espoused this view. Beginning in 1906, he consistently advocated a preventive war against Serbia, whose support was so patently essential to any South Slav unification movement. (See Jelavich and Jelavich, National States, 264.)

purely secondary aim, however, limited to portions of the political elite. In Croatia, nationalist ideas were not very strongly rooted in the masses. Certainly, the more radical Yugoslav concepts were only popular among the youth and intelligentsia. Most Croats remained loyal to the empire, within which they hoped to achieve a political accommodation of their national goals.⁴⁷

Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Habsburg throne, was the Austrian leader popularly identified with the concept of Trialism, or a Yugoslav political entity within the empire. His assassination, at the hands of Bosnian Serb revolutionaries seeking the unification of Bosnia-Herzegovina with Serbia, provoked the outbreak of the war which catalyzed the creation of the Yugoslav state.⁴⁸ The process of state creation was distinctly not attended by the birth of a truly "Yugoslav" nation, however. The consequences proved as disastrous as they were enduring.

Prince Regent Alexander and Prime Minister Pasic put the creation of a Yugoslav state on Serbia's agenda soon after war broke out, as documentary evidence shows.⁴⁹ Pasic made it official in his war aims speech of December 7, 1914; his Nis Declaration called for the liberation and unification of all Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

⁴⁷Gale Stokes, "The Role of the Yugoslav Committee in the Formation of Yugoslavia," in The Creation of Yugoslavia: 1914-1918, ed. Dimitrije Djordjevic (Santa Barbara: Clio Books, 1980), 51; Jelavich and Jelavich, National States, 258, 260-61.

⁴⁸Jelavich and Jelavich, National States, 258, 261-64; Petrovich, 612-21.

⁴⁹Serbian policy was inclined in this direction from the beginning of the war, as indicated by Prince Regent Alexander's Aug. 4th address to the army, and a Pasic memorandum of Sept. 21st. (See Petrovich, 630; Stokes, 53, 68-69.)

Pasic instigated the creation of the Yugoslav Committee, composed of leading South Slav emigré politicians, as a propaganda organization dedicated to furthering this goal. Ante Trumbic and Frano Supilo, Dalmatian Croats instrumental in establishing the Croato-Serbian Coalition in 1905, were the Yugoslav Committee's leading figures.⁵⁰

The emigrés were by no means content to see themselves as a propaganda organ of the Serbian government, however. They saw themselves rather as the representatives of the Habsburg South Slavs, responsible for negotiating the terms of Yugoslav unification with their Serbian partners. As such, the Committee was profoundly uneasy with the concept of "liberation" by Serbian arms and amalgamation into the existing Serbian state structure. The Committee believed no liberation was possible without Serbian help, however, and initially worked with Pasic in the hope that the situation would develop favorably towards a federalist solution.⁵¹

But Pasic represented a Serbian expansionist tradition which saw the proposed territorial acquisitions as an extension of the existing centralist state, as opposed to the establishment of a new and fundamentally different political entity.⁵² He evaded any commitment on the shape of the future state, but he planned to grant the Croats and Slovenes equal rights as associated peoples and recognize their national individuality. Pasic emphatically did not,

⁵⁰Stokes, 53-54, 69; Petrovich, 628-30; Milorad Ekmecic, "Serbian War Aims," in The Creation of Yugoslavia: 1914-1918, ed. Dimitrije Djordjevic (Santa Barbara: Clio Books, 1980), 20.

⁵¹Stokes, 53-55; Petrovich, 632.

⁵²Petrovich, 631-32.

however, see the Habsburg emigrés as equal partners with the Kingdom of Serbia in the quest to establish the new state, nor did he ever put Yugoslav interests on a par with Serbian ones.⁵³

The Yugoslav Committee disagreed with Pasic on the fundamental issues of manner of unification and organization of the future state. Their differences were further aggravated by Pasic's May 1916 acceptance of Italian territorial claims on the Adriatic coast.⁵⁴ However, among the Committee's major personalities, only Frano Supilo drew the ultimate conclusion: Pasic would never yield on issues of critical importance to Serbia, such as state organization. Supilo resigned from the Committee when it refused to break with Serbia.⁵⁵

A year later, in June 1917, a variety of pressures brought Pasic and the Yugoslav Committee together at the conference table in Corfu. Revolutionary developments in Russia threatened to deprive Serbia of her primary international sponsor. Closer to home, the "May Declaration," in which the South Slavic political parties remaining in Austria-Hungary expressed their loyalty to the Habsburg Empire, signaled a possible Trialist solution which would

⁵³Stokes, 54-55.

⁵⁴In the Treaty of London (Apr. 1915), the Allies agreed to give Italy extensive territories on the Adriatic coast in return for her entry into the war. The territories were non-negotiable in the eyes of the Habsburg Croats; Pasic, however, was dealing with the Allies from a position of weakness after Serbia's disastrous 1915-1916 retreat through Albania. He only publicly acknowledged the legitimacy of Italy's claims in May 1916. A practitioner of Realpolitik, Pasic was also willing to negotiate with lands crucial in Serbian eyes. He had earlier acquiesced to Allied offers to compensate Bulgaria with parts of Macedonia, if she would enter the war on the Allied side. (See Petrovich, 630-33.)

⁵⁵Stokes, 57-58.

preempt any Serbian expansion in that direction. The May Declaration also threatened to undermine the political relevance of the emigré Yugoslav Committee.⁵⁶

The Corfu Conference sought to outline the shape of the future Yugoslav state, but the centralism espoused by Pasic and the federalist proposals of Trumbic defied compromise. The crucial issue of state organization was simply postponed; responsibility for the settlement of this question was delegated to a future constitutional convention, which would regulate the affairs of the state.⁵⁷

The end result was a compromise declaration calling for a parliamentary monarchy of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes under the Karadjordjevic dynasty, with guarantees of cultural and religious freedom and equality of the three nations.⁵⁸ Rather awkwardly,

⁵⁶Pasic was also under pressure from Alexander and the Opposition for an accommodation with the Committee. (See Petrovich, 636-43; Stokes, 58-59.)

⁵⁷The deferral of the crucial question of state organization almost exactly duplicated the situation 22 years later, when this issue stymied negotiations for the Sporazum. The respective Serbian and Croatian views, in both cases, were nearly identical. The only way to reach any agreement on the issue at all was to defer it, because the concepts of unitary and federal state organization were, and remained, irreconcilable.

⁵⁸Petrovich, 643-49; Stokes, 58-59. According to Ivan Mestrovic, a Croat founding member of the Yugoslav Committee, the Serbs originally planned to recognize only the Orthodox and Catholic churches. Pasic's deputy Stojan Protic told Mestrovic that Bosnian Moslems would be forced to "return to the [Orthodox] faith of their forefathers." This issue illustrates the continuing Serb-Croat struggle over Bosnia, which Trumbic described as "the key to Serbo-Croat relations." (See Ivan Mestrovic, "The Yugoslav Committee in London and the Declaration of Corfu," in The Croatian Nation in its Struggle for Freedom and Independence, ed. Antun F. Bonifacic and Clement S. Mihanovich [Chicago: "Croatia" Cultural Publishing Center, 1955], 186-90.)

these three peoples were declared one "three-named" people. This rather dubious ethnographic concept was of course at the root of all "Yugoslav" ideas, but its adoption in the Declaration of Corfu did not signify Pasic's conversion to narodno jedinstvo. It was simply a tactic to present a powerful and united front to the Allies, using President Wilson's discourse of national self-determination as a tool.⁵⁹

In an immediate sense, Pasic won a great tactical victory. He gained formal acceptance of the Serbian dynasty's role in the future state, without making any concrete concessions towards federalism or proportionalism which would dilute Serbian ability to shape that state. The promised democratic institutions were essentially extensions of prewar Serbian parliamentary practices. The effect of the Corfu Declaration, which of course had no statutory authority in any case, was to bind the Committee to supporting a Yugoslav solution in which Serbia, rather than the Habsburg Empire, was the key figure.⁶⁰ In retrospect, however, the Treaty of Corfu proved part of a continuum which led to disaster--the establishment of Yugoslavia on Serbian terms, which Croats were unwilling to accept.

All of the planning for a future Yugoslav state retained a distinctly contingent quality as long as the Allies foresaw the postwar survival of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. But this Allied position softened amid the military crises of 1918, and the Habsburg South Slavs accelerated the process. On October 29, 1918, the National Council of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs proclaimed the

⁵⁹Petrovich, 645-46.

⁶⁰Stokes, 60; Petrovich, 648-49.

independence of the State of Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, laying claim to all of the empire's South Slavic lands.⁶¹

Events now raced towards the establishment of a Yugoslav state. Pasic, told by the French to meet with the Yugoslav Committee and the National Council to establish a joint government, went to Geneva on November 6th. The Serbian Prime Minister was forced by weight of numbers to concede terms which meant unification on the equal basis long sought by the Croats. But Pasic and his deputy Stojan Protic engineered the Serbian government's repudiation of the agreement on November 11th. They correctly believed that Svetozar Pribicevic, the Serbian head of the Croato-Serbian Coalition which dominated the National Council in Zagreb, could do likewise in the absence of Trumbic and Council President Anton Korosec. For by mid-November, rampant internal disorder and the imminent threat of Italian occupation had the National Council desperate for a solution. Immediate unification with Serbia appeared the only hope.⁶²

Pribicevic and his centralist supporters faced a strong federalist contingent in the National Council, however, who were not prepared to undertake unconditional unification. Fear of Serbian hegemony united three main parties in a federalist faction: the Croatian Peasant Party, led by Stjepan Radic; the Party of Right (founded by Starcevic); and the Pure Party of Right (the "Frankists.") These elements, as well as the Croatian middle class,

⁶¹Stokes, 63; Petrovich, 661-62.

⁶²Petrovich, 663-80; Banac, 134-36; Stokes, 64-65.

sought to obtain maximum autonomy for Croatia in the new state.⁶³ Their failure to gain satisfaction in November 1918 led to twenty years of bitter opposition, generating a legacy of bitterness and mistrust which precipitated, but also crippled, the Sporazum of August 1939.

Radic proposed a confederative solution to the unification problem, whereby the Serbian king, the Croatian Ban, and the Slovene National Council president would share the regency. The National Council in Zagreb rejected this plan as "extreme separatism."⁶⁴ Instead, twenty-eight representatives were chosen to go to Belgrade to negotiate for unification on the basis of detailed written instructions. These instructions made significant concessions to centralist principles, but retained a broadly federalist character. The Council emphasized its delegates were to execute the arrangements for unification "without delay."⁶⁵ Radic, warning that the Council was proceeding towards unification "like drunken geese into a fog," was disqualified from the delegation for his "agitation."⁶⁶

⁶³Petrovich, 675. In the 1890s, Josip Frank and his radical followers branched off from Starcevic and his Party of Right, as the latter was softening his anti-Serb stance. The term "Frankovci" (Frankist) later became a colloquialism which connoted all right-wing Croatian extremists. (See Banac, 94-95.)

⁶⁴Banac, 136.

⁶⁵Banac, 136-37; Petrovich, 676-77.

⁶⁶Banac, 137; Petrovich, 677-78. Banac notes that Radic reconstructed his "final warning" speech from memory, in 1920. Even if his 1918 language was perhaps less colorful, however, the real significance of the speech was its propaganda value to Croat nationalists in the interwar (and even post-WW II) period. It was viewed as proof that Radic had recognized the dangers of unification in 1918. The enduring quality of Radic's "drunken geese" simile in Croatian memory is reflected in nationalist rhetoric of the 1970s. In a 1973 interview, Croatian

Neither Pasic nor the Serbian National Assembly was present in Belgrade as a negotiating partner, so the National Council delegates had to frame their proposal as an Address to the Throne. Pribicevic wanted this to be simply "an outpouring of loyalty,"⁶⁷ but the delegates hesitated to adopt this course. Trumbic's personal representative then arrived, though, informing them that Trumbic viewed immediate unification along the lines of the Corfu Declaration as imperative. A telegram from the Yugoslav Committee painted a still darker picture, describing quick unification as the only way to fend off threats to the new state's territorial integrity.⁶⁸

In this environment of haste and uncertainty, domestic chaos and impending foreign occupation, the delegation made a fateful decision to give priority to immediate unification, rather than insisting upon detailed negotiations. Its Address to the Throne recognized the Karadjordjevic dynasty as the state's rightful ruler, and called for the establishment of a single national representative body until a constituent assembly could permanently regulate the affairs of state. Altogether omitting the National Council's detailed conditions, the address was the political equivalent of a blank check. On December 1, 1918, Prince Regent Alexander declared the

writer Miroslav Krleza opined: "In 1918, we got together like a flock of geese." The similarity is almost certainly not coincidental. (See Ante Cuvalo, The Croatian National Movement, 1966-72 [New York: East European Monographs, 1990], 1.)

⁶⁷Banac, 138.

⁶⁸Petrovich, 680-82; Banac, 138.

unification. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was born.⁶⁹

The new state faced a multitude of daunting problems. Amidst the devastation and dislocation caused by war,⁷⁰ a new political, social, and economic entity had to be forged from lands which previously belonged to Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Serbia. In the new age of "national self-determination," the ethnic diversity of these territories was simply staggering. Agrarian reform in the new lands was an urgent necessity, but the variety of local conditions prevented the application of any uniform standard. These difficulties were aggravated by the postwar peace settlements, which did not definitively establish the new kingdom's boundaries until 1920. Larger, richer, and more homogeneous states have staggered under lesser burdens.⁷¹

⁶⁹Petrovich, 680-82; Banac, 138. Montenegro and Vojvodina declared union with Serbia in November 1918, prior to the declaration of the new state. (See Petrovich, 678.)

⁷⁰According to Petrovich, Serbia lost 25% of its population in the Great War, including 62.5% of males between 15 and 55 years of age. Most of its territory was also under enemy occupation from 1915-18, and suffered accordingly. Myers observes the population losses of Northern Serbia and Montenegro combined--the only data available--"were relatively much higher than for any belligerent country." His casualty estimate is 23%. (See Petrovich, 662-63; U. S. Bureau of the Census, International Population Statistics Reports, ser. P 90, no.5: "The Population of Yugoslavia," by Paul F. Myers and Arthur A. Campbell [Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1954], 55.)

⁷¹For brief surveys outlining the scope of these problems, see Stevan K. Pavlowitch, Yugoslavia (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 53-58; Wayne S. Vucinich, "Interwar Yugoslavia," in Contemporary Yugoslavia: Twenty Years of Socialist Experiment, ed. Wayne S. Vucinich (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1969), 3-6. The standard English-language work on social and economic issues in interwar Yugoslavia is still Jozo Tomasevich, Peasants, Politics, and Economic

All of these problems became grist for the mill of Serb-Croat conflict which dominated Yugoslavia's domestic politics throughout the interwar period.⁷² This conflict revolved around the fundamental political issue of state organization, which had been sidestepped at Corfu, Geneva, and again upon unification. The reality of union meant a solution was now imperative. But the antagonisms exposed, created, and aggravated by the ensuing process of resolution permeated the life of the state and its peoples, and fatally compromised their common future.

Stjepan Radic and his Croat Peasant Party (C. P. P.) quickly became the focus of Croatian nationalist opposition to the centralist state view. For during 1919 and 1920, Radic's peasant republican ideology became a mass movement in Croatia-Slavonia, mobilizing Croat national consciousness in the newly-enfranchised peasant masses for the first time.⁷³ Radic adamantly refused to accept the act of unification, and declined to send C. P. P. representatives to the provisional parliament in Belgrade. Further, he demanded the convocation of a Croatian constituent assembly which could establish an independent Croat peasant republic. In early 1919, the C. P. P. gathered over 100,000 signatures on a petition intended to

Change in Yugoslavia (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1955), hereafter cited as "Peasants."

⁷²In accordance with common practice, the term "Yugoslavia" will be used to denote the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, except when the context may dictate otherwise. The name "Yugoslavia" was not officially tolerated until 1929, when it became mandatory. This apparently paradoxical development will be addressed later in the narrative.

⁷³Banac, 227-31; Behschnitt, 240.

transmit these demands to the Paris Peace Conference; for these activities, Radic was clapped in jail.⁷⁴

American Chargé d'Affaires H. Percival Dodge duly took notice of Croatian calls for federal, autonomous, or republican forms of government as early as February 1919,⁷⁵ but Radic supporters were not thought particularly numerous. Dodge underestimated Radic as the "agitator leader of [the] small, so called, peasants party [sic]."⁷⁶ The elections for the Yugoslav constituent assembly in November 1920 proved Dodge wrong, giving the Peasant Party sweeping majorities in Croatia, and establishing it as the fourth largest party in Yugoslavia.⁷⁷

Radic and the C. P. P. decided to boycott the constituent assembly, however, when the provisional government announced that a simple majority (fifty percent plus one) would suffice to pass the eventual constitution.⁷⁸ Such a provision practically guaranteed Serbian dominance in shaping the document, since their parties had a

⁷⁴Banac, 229, 239-41; Jelavich, Balkans: Twentieth Century, 149.

⁷⁵Dodge to State Dept., Feb. 21, 1919, 860h.01/60; and Feb. 23, 1919, 860h.01/42, National Archives Microfilm Publication M358, roll 6, Records of the Dept. of State, RG 59, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

⁷⁶Dodge to State Dept., Feb. 23, 1919, 860h.01/42, M358-6.

⁷⁷Banac, 227, 388-92, 394-95. This was a significant achievement, as numerous parties contested the elections. (See Vucinich, 7; Alex Dragnich, The First Yugoslavia: Search for a Viable Political System [Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983], 21. [Hereafter cited as "First Yugoslavia."])

⁷⁸Banac, 393-94. The seed of this dispute was planted in the Corfu Declaration of 1917, which called for a "qualified majority" to approve the eventual constitution. Croat autonomists believed this implied a regionally-based formula, thus ensuring that Croatia was not bound by a Serbian majority. (See Banac, 397, for the Croatian rationale; Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 22, emphasizes the basis for the Serbian interpretation.)

majority of the delegates. On December 8, 1920, Radic held a tremendous protest rally in Zagreb to announce his decision to boycott the assembly.⁷⁹ In May 1921, he went a step farther, publishing a Constitution of the Neutral Peasant Republic of Croatia, which called for an independent Croatian state within the framework of a loose Yugoslav confederation.⁸⁰

In spite of--even perhaps partially because of--Radic's agitation, Yugoslavia's constituent assembly adopted a strictly centralist constitution.⁸¹ Symbolically, it was proclaimed on St. Vitus's Day (Vidovdan), the Serbian national feast day.⁸² The Vidovdan constitution established the state as a unicameral parliamentary monarchy. Reflecting the unitary ideology of the

⁷⁹Dragnich reports 80,000 participants "proclaimed the Neutral Peasant Republic of Croatia, and took an oath to the Croatian homeland and the Croatian Republic." Banac tells of 100,000 participants, and discusses events in the context of the "unmistakably conciliatory tone" of Radic's post-election behavior. Per Banac, the rally stressed non-participation in the constituent assembly, integration of the term "Republican" into the Peasant Party's title, and the pursuit of party goals in "agreement" with the Serbs. The contrasting emphases of these two distinguished scholars, of Serbian and Croatian extraction respectively, is an enlightening example of the historiographical challenges posed by the subject. (See Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 21; Banac, 393-94.)

⁸⁰Banac, 401-2; Dragnich, 26.

⁸¹Dragnich and Pavlowitch both comment on the negative impact that Radic's agitation had on Serb willingness to consider any decentralizing measures, given the unstable domestic and international situation. (See Pavlowitch, 63; Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 25-26.)

⁸²This date was enshrined in national epic poetry as the anniversary of the battle of Kosovo in 1389, when Ottoman armies defeated the Serbian Empire and reduced it to vassalage. Kosovo symbolized Serbian national pride, valor against all odds, and the burning desire to throw off the "Turkish yoke." June 28th was also the anniversary of the 1914 assassination of Franz Ferdinand. (See Banac, 403-5; Pavlowitch, 64.)

Corfu Declaration, the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were defined as three nations comprising a "three-named people," with a "Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian" nationality and language. Administrative and financial authority was in the hands of the central government, located in the capital city of Belgrade.⁸³

This centralist organization reflected the clear triumph of Serbian state tradition, in which a compactly united state and nation offered the best prospects of survival in a dangerous world. Since Yugoslav political parties were largely organized on ethnic and regional bases, it also practically guaranteed Serbian ability to dominate affairs in which ethnic interests were at stake.

The Vidovdan constitution clearly represented a crushing blow to Croatian hopes for a federal or confederal state--not to speak of Croatian independence. The centralist nature of the constitution did not recognize any specifically Croatian political entity, and the unitary approach to the national issue threatened to submerge the Croatian nation in a Serbian-dominated identity. In short, Croats rightly saw their survival as a unique national entity mortally jeopardized. The danger posed by all of the past Yugoslav concepts appeared to be realized.

Though Radic and the smaller Croatian parties were not the only groups which had boycotted the constitutional convention,⁸⁴

⁸³Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 25; Vucinich, 9-10. The murky concept of three "separate" nations who constitute "one" people is a testimony to the difficulties inherent in "Yugoslav" ideologies.

⁸⁴The Slovenian parties and the Communist Party withdrew during the course of the convention. (Pavlowitch, 64; Jelavich, Balkans: Twentieth Century, 150.)

they were the Vidovdan constitution's most implacable foes in the years that followed. Radic vehemently denounced the unitarist state as a violation of historic Croatian state right,⁸⁵ and he and his party refused to take their seats in the Skupstina (parliament). In the March 1923 elections, the C. P. P. emerged as the second largest party in Yugoslavia, and established itself unmistakably as the dominant force in Croatian politics.⁸⁶ After negotiations with Pasic and his Radical Party failed to establish a coalition on terms satisfactory to Radic in July, the Peasant Party leader publicly denounced the dynasty, the constitution, and the government. He then went into exile in Vienna, and vainly sought recognition and assistance for the Croatian cause in London and Paris.⁸⁷

The unpredictable Radic then journeyed to Moscow and enrolled the C. P. P. in the Communist Peasant International, though he actually had no Communist sympathies. Since Yugoslavia did not officially recognize the Soviet Union, and had outlawed the

⁸⁵Radic had espoused narodno jedinstvo in the prewar years, but rapidly distanced himself from this concept after 1918. In 1919, Radic observed narodno jedinstvo was necessary to protect Croats from "foreign brute force" (German and Hungarian) before the war, but "now that foreign force no longer exists." (Banac, 231-35.) His post-1918 emphasis on state right, so clearly in the Starcevic tradition, was the most meaningful tool to distinguish and preserve a Croat identity within a common state. Croat nationalists also increasingly stressed existing differences in religion and alphabet in an attempt to culturally differentiate themselves from the Serbs. These factors, as well as a history of Habsburg administration, underlay the much-abused stereotype of Croats as westernized and civilized, whereas Serbs were allegedly brutal and backward Byzantines.

⁸⁶Banac, 236-37; Tomasevich, Peasants, 256. The party maintained this predominance throughout the interwar period, although its influence waned significantly after the Sporazum. (This development is discussed in detail in chapters 2 and 3 of this work.)

⁸⁷Pavlowitch, 67.

Communist Party in 1922, Radic's actions caused the uproar he desired.⁸⁸ But as he sadly noted to his close collaborator Dr. Vladko Macek, he had accomplished nothing concrete in Moscow: "The Communists do not want allies, only servants."⁸⁹

If nothing else, Radic accomplished the further polarization of Serb-Croat relations. His fiery denunciations of the government, dynasty, and state from 1919 through 1924 kept the national conflict at a fever pitch. He referred to Croatia's imprisonment in a "Serbian Bastille," overseen by a corrupt "palace camarilla" and a government of "thieves, ruffians, and intruders."⁹⁰ American Minister Dodge reported the tone of a Radic proclamation in a May 1924 despatch, and assessed the seriousness of the Serb-Croat impasse:

It [the proclamation] contains a series of exaggerations and misstatements so palpable as only to appeal to the most ignorant. . . . It is also highly inflammatory in tone, tending under a thin disguise of peaceful protestations to excite racial [national] and party strife. . . .

The present crisis is the most serious which has yet occurred in this country and it has brought up more squarely than ever before the fundamental question of centralization or autonomy.⁹¹

Some Serbian leaders, including Pasic himself, began to speak publicly of "amputating" the troublesome Croats from the state--a move which would expose Croatia to the expansionist ambitions of

⁸⁸Vucinich, 14; Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 28.

⁸⁹Macek, 100.

⁹⁰Radic made these remarks on different occasions from Jul. 1923 to Nov. 1924. They are representative of the tone he commonly adopted in his speeches, written declarations, and letters. (See Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 34-35.)

⁹¹Dodge to State Dept., May 10, 1924, 860h.00/209, M358-3.

Italy.⁹² Marko Trifkovic, spokesman for the Serbian Radicals, announced his party could not cooperate with the Croatian Peasants, since Radic "declared himself an enemy of all that is dear to every Serb: the glorious history of the people during the war, the Army, and the Karageorgevitch Dynasty."⁹³

It was thus an astounding volte face when the Peasant Party entered a governing coalition with the Radical Party in July 1925; Radic himself accepted a cabinet position in November.⁹⁴ In a despatch to the State Department, Gordon Paddock reported: "The solution of the Serbo-Croatian question has . . . relieved an exceedingly embarrassing situation [in Yugoslavia]."⁹⁵ But Leslie Davis, U. S. Consul in Zagreb, accurately expressed the tenuousness of the partnership, as well as the grievous nature of Yugoslavia's divided state:

[the coalition] has thus shelved or at least allayed the bitterness of the Serbo-Croatian quarrel, which through the whole six years has paralyzed and weakened all endeavors to improve the Government and to develop the economic life of the country.⁹⁶

⁹²Dragnich, Pasic, 172.

⁹³Gordon Paddock to State Dept., Nov. 24, 1924, 860h.00/224, M358-3. Paddock was the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires ad interim.

⁹⁴Pavlowitch, 70. Radic was released from jail in July 1925 after the C. P. P. joined the government. He had been arrested in January on charges of antistate activities, as a result of his sojourn in the Soviet Union in the previous year. Radic had returned to Zagreb in July 1924; his belated detention, just one month prior to elections in Feb. 1925, was not a coincidence. (See Dragnich, Pasic, 176-77; Macek, 105.)

⁹⁵Gordon Paddock to State Dept., Aug. 17, 1925, 860h.00/258, M358-3.

⁹⁶*Ibid.* Davis's report was enclosed in Paddock's despatch to Washington.

For the first time since Yugoslavia's inception, Radic and his Croat Peasant Party (which now dropped "Republican" from its title) recognized the unity of the state, its constitution, and its ruling dynasty. Radic's stunning maneuver was apparently motivated by practical political considerations: the fear of Croatia's "amputation," the suppression of the C. P. P., or possibly the realization that compromise with Pasic's Radicals offered the best hope of achieving Croatian goals. Radic's exact motives are unclear, but he encountered some opposition within his party's ranks to the reconciliation with the Serbs.⁹⁷ This dissent within Croatian ranks foreshadowed that which arose after the Sporazum in 1939; the traditional emphasis on resistance to Belgrade was difficult, if not impossible, to reverse by a purely political agreement.

In any case, the C. P. P. soon reverted to the politics of opposition. Radic's accusations of corruption against Serbian fellow ministers precipitated a cabinet crisis, and he was replaced in April 1926; the Peasant-Radical coalition collapsed definitively in January 1927.⁹⁸ The Peasant Party eschewed its old tactics of boycott, however, now choosing to disrupt the system from within. Radic's lieutenant Vladko Macek, himself a member of the Skupstina, described the new strategy in his memoirs:

The Coalition [C. P. P. and Democrats] began to practice

⁹⁷Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 37-40. Macek's memoirs omit any discussion of Radic's reasoning and of Croatian reaction to the coalition, though he must have been well aware of both. He emphasizes only that the C. P. P. did not renounce "its determination to struggle . . . for revision of the [constitution]." (See Macek, 105-6.)

⁹⁸Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 45.

systematic obstructionism in the National Assembly, aided by the quite liberal order of procedure. Countless motions were made at every session, all labelled "urgent," in order to gain precedence over the regular parliamentary business. The Coalition thus in effect suspended the Assembly's ordinary tasks indefinitely. The general atmosphere of Parliament soon became fraught with tension; and threats like . . . "Blood will have to be spilled" were uttered by certain Radicals.⁹⁹

By June 1928, the legislative sessions had degenerated into scenes of riotous disorder, taunts, and fisticuffs. The violence reached a fatal crescendo on June 20, 1928, when an agitated Radical deputy from Montenegro opened fire on a group of Croat deputies in the Skupstina. Stjepan Radic died of his wounds on August 8th.¹⁰⁰

Croatian deputies walked out of the Skupstina, not to return until August 1939. In a resolution passed shortly before Radic died, the Peasant-Democratic Coalition denounced Serbian hegemony and asserted "that the organization of the state, as it has existed up to now, must be considered void after the recent tragic event. . . ." The resolution also declared any decisions made by the "rump National Assembly" to be "void in all parts of the former Austro-Hungarian

⁹⁹Macek, 109-10.

¹⁰⁰Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 48-52; Pavlowitch, 72-73; Macek, 110-16. Macek provides an eyewitness account of the shooting, which resulted in the deaths of three Croats and the wounding of two more. Some Croat nationalists maintain the shooting was a plot which can be traced back to "the Royal Palace itself." Whether correct or not, this and similar assumptions are indicative of Croatia's passionate response to the event. (See Charles Kamber, review of In the Struggle for Freedom, by Vladko Macek, in Journal of Croatian Studies 2 [1961]: 165.)

territories." Upon the death of Radic, Vladko Macek picked up the torch of Croatian national resistance.¹⁰¹

The shots that killed Radic also mortally wounded Yugoslavia's struggling democracy. After several months of observing futile attempts to establish an effective governing coalition, King Alexander summoned Macek to a private audience to determine his conditions for Croatian cooperation. In interviews on January 4th and 5th, 1929, Macek called for the reorganization of the state into seven confederal units, each to have autonomy in all areas except foreign relations; this function was to be shared by a committee of representatives drawn from the states. Military contingents were to be controlled by individual legislatures, rather than the confederation. Alexander, committed to preserving the integrity of the state at all costs, rejected these proposals. On January 6, 1929, the king proclaimed the dissolution of the Skupstina, the rescission of the Vidovdan constitution, and the prohibition of regionally-based political parties. The era of royal dictatorship had begun.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹Macek, 114-15, 119.

¹⁰²Alexander used notes of his conversation with Macek to reconstruct the latter's proposals in an interview with Hamilton Fish Armstrong in April 1929. Macek's memoirs, written from memory, complement that account. The seven proposed units were: Slovenia; Croatia, Slavonia and Dalmatia; Bosnia and Hercegovina; Montenegro; Serbia; Vojvodina; and Macedonia. Macek proposed their territories correspond to the "historical boundaries" of 1918. According to Armstrong, Macek was willing to see Serbia absorb Macedonia if Croatia got northern Bosnia. This scheme foreshadowed the Croatian proposals of 1939-40, which Serbs vehemently rejected as an attempt to break up the unity of Serbian lands. (See Hamilton Fish Armstrong, Peace and Counterpeace: From Wilson to Hitler [New York: Harper & Row, 1971], 421-24; Hamilton Fish Armstrong, "The Royal Dictatorship in Yugoslavia," Foreign Affairs 7, [July 1929]: 605; Macek, 123.)

The king's announced intention was to "safeguard the unity of the state at all cost"; to this end, he proclaimed it "the supreme ideal of my reign . . . to maintain the union of the People." (Italics mine.)¹⁰³ Alexander sought to solve the Serb-Croat dispute by enforcing unitary Yugoslavism (jugoslavenstvo) from the highest level. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and new Yugoslav national colors replaced traditional Serbian and Croatian national ensigns. Nine new administrative units (banovinas) were also established which intentionally scrambled historical territorial boundaries.¹⁰⁴ But as Alexander ruefully told British minister Sir Nevile Henderson, he really needed "forty years of peace in which to build up a tradition of honest administration. That is the only true foundation for Yugoslav unity."¹⁰⁵

Macek and his Peasant Party associates scorned King Alexander's "peculiar idea of extinguishing with a single decree the thousand-year old national consciousness of the Croats and Slovenes, and producing by magic a new 'Yugoslav nation.' Of course, this was utter nonsense. . . ." ¹⁰⁶ Croatian nationalists had rejected

¹⁰³Armstrong, "Royal Dictatorship," 601.

¹⁰⁴Pavlowitch, 78; Jacob B.Hoptner, Yugoslavia in Crisis:1934-1941 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1962), 8.

¹⁰⁵Nevile Henderson, Water Under the Bridges (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1945), 182.

¹⁰⁶Macek, 126. Macek's formulation is illuminating in several respects: it exemplifies the "historic state right" argument which underpinned interwar Croatian nationalism; it inaccurately equates this history with a Croat "national consciousness" of the same vintage; and it omits mention of the fact that Serbian national identity was also negated by Alexander's jugoslavenstvo. It is a good example of the strong element of exclusivism which made the Serb-Croat issue so insoluble.

the narodno jedinstvo principle of the Vidovdan constitution as a negation of their national identity, and their hostility extended to the jugoslavenstvo incorporated into Alexander's 1931 constitution. In Croatian eyes, the revisited "Yugoslav idea" was simply a mechanism to further entrench the Great Serbian idea in the state; in reaction, the C. P. P. grew stronger than ever before.¹⁰⁷

Despite his intentions, Alexander's Yugoslavism became, or at least appeared to become, a vehicle for the imposition of Great Serbian ideas. The political leaders and administrative officials who implemented the king's policies were primarily Serbs, as were the army and gendarmerie officials who enforced these policies. Many, even most, of these men were steeped in Serbian nationalism, and they obeyed the commands of a hereditary Serbian monarch who headed a state modeled after the Kingdom of Serbia. Under such circumstances, it is understandable that most Croats saw Yugoslavism as inimical to their national interests, whereas most Serbs perceived no equivalent threat.¹⁰⁸ It is not clear, however, whether this hegemonic tendency would have persisted into the

It must be stressed, however, that this characteristic was emphatically not limited to the Croats.

¹⁰⁷Pavlowitch, 79-80; Hugh Seton-Watson, Eastern Europe Between the Wars: 1918-1941, 3rd ed. (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1962), 226.

¹⁰⁸Seton-Watson, 225-26; Vucinich, 10-11. Serbs did not particularly perceive Yugoslavism as a threat to their national identity, but they greatly regretted the loss of political freedom under the dictatorship. U. S. Minister Wilson reported Serbs were disgusted with the dictatorship, but would do nothing to endanger the state, "which must be saved at any price and sacrifice." (See Charles S. Wilson to State Dept., May 31, 1934, 860h.00/678, M1203-2.)

1930s, had not Serbs--with some justification--feared the obstructionist Croats posed a danger to the state.¹⁰⁹

After five years of unyielding Croatian opposition to the royal dictatorship, Alexander apparently became convinced that accommodation with Macek was the only way to break the impasse. In October 1934, the king sent word to Macek, who was serving a prison sentence for seditious activity, that they would meet upon the monarch's return from a state visit to France.¹¹⁰ The meeting never occurred, however, for Alexander was assassinated upon his arrival in Marseilles.¹¹¹

A regency council of three members assumed Alexander's position, as young King Peter II was only eleven years old. Prince Paul, Alexander's Oxford-educated cousin, soon asserted himself as

¹⁰⁹Seton-Watson, 226; Hoptner, 293.

¹¹⁰Macek, 153-54; Dragnich, 97. The exact reasons for Macek's imprisonment are unclear. Officially, his offense was the Peasant-Democrat Coalition's resolution of Nov. 7, 1932; it denounced Serbian hegemony and demanded the state's reorganization, from the "starting-point of 1918." Macek had also given highly controversial interviews to the foreign press, however. In a June 1932 interview, he predicted Yugoslavia's imminent collapse and Croatia's consequent "liberation." In another, Macek asserted any solution of the Croatian question was impossible with "the past or present Serbian rulers." (See Macek, 137-40, for the text of the resolution; Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 93-94, discusses the interviews.)

¹¹¹The king's assassin was a member of the Bulgarian-based Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, working in league with Croatian Ustasa (fascist) leader Ante Pavelic. The Italian and Hungarian governments were heavily implicated in the act. (See Hoptner, 27-28; Peter II, King of Yugoslavia, A King's Heritage: The Memoirs of King Peter II of Yugoslavia [London: Cassell & Co., 1955], 39-43.) Pavelic, who founded the Ustasa after Radic's murder in 1928, will be discussed at more length in ch. 3 of this work. It must be emphasized that his outlaw organization acted independently of Macek and the C. P. P.

the dominant figure on the council. Paul was an introspective man whose personality, ambitions and methods were completely unlike his royal predecessor. While Alexander led Serbian soldiers on the battlefields of the Great War, Paul had no military training and was physically unfit for active service. Alexander lived for responsibility, both in the military and in political life. Paul collected art, and dreaded the burdens of leadership. But both men shared a sincere and abiding sense of duty to Yugoslavia and all its peoples, and a determination to resolve the festering Croatian question.¹¹²

The gradual liberalization of political life began soon after Paul assumed his duties, but the prince adamantly maintained the regency council must operate within the framework of the 1931 constitution. In his opinion, major constitutional modifications were the sole prerogative of the legitimate sovereign; the regency's mandate was to function as caretaker until King Peter II attained his majority in September 1941.¹¹³ This stance by Prince Paul proved a major stumbling block in his initial attempts to reach a *modus vivendi* with Macek, for the Croat leader demanded the outright abolition of the dictatorially imposed constitution and the

¹¹²Neil Balfour and Sally Mackay, Paul of Yugoslavia: Britain's Maligned Friend (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1980), ch. 1 and 2, *passim*; Hoptner, 25-26.

¹¹³Paul called in four prominent experts in Yugoslav constitutional law to advise him whether he could institute a parliamentary monarchy and limit the powers of the central government, without thereby limiting the powers of the future king. The experts were divided in their opinions. (See Hoptner, 26.) For a contemporary analysis of the issue by a Serbian legal expert, see Lazar Markovic, "The Yugoslav Constitutional Problem," Slavonic and East European Review (London) 16, (1937-1938): 356-68.

convocation of a constituent assembly. Meetings in June 1935 and November 1936 between the two leaders foundered upon this fundamental disagreement.¹¹⁴

And as the general elections of May 1935 had demonstrated, Macek's political clout was intact despite years of dictatorial repression.¹¹⁵ The participation of the Serb Agrarian Party in the Macek-led United Opposition also marked the first time a purely Serbian party joined the call to reorganize the state as a step towards national reconciliation.¹¹⁶ But the Peasant Party was content just to flex its political muscle publicly after the years of enforced inactivity. Reverting to their old tactics of boycott, its deputies refused to take their seats in the Skupstina. Two months later, Macek's birthday was the occasion for a massive nationalist celebration in Zagreb, which was bedecked with the red and white Croatian colors in his honor. Clearly, the Croat Peasant Party was still a force to be reckoned with, and Macek was its "uncrowned king."¹¹⁷

Macek formalized his party's ties with the Serb Opposition in October 1937, signing an agreement which proclaimed their "common struggle" for the fundamental reorganization of the state. The proclamation demanded the abolition of the 1931 constitution,

¹¹⁴Balfour, 111, 132; Hoptner, 130.

¹¹⁵The United Opposition polled 37.4% of the vote, despite significant attempts by the Jevtic government to influence the election process. (See Macek, 158-64; Vucinich, 22-23.)

¹¹⁶Mima S. Nedelcovych, "The Serb-Croat Controversy: Events Leading to the Sporazum of 1939," Serbian Studies 1, no. 3 (1981): 18.

¹¹⁷Macek, 165-66; Hoptner, 8. As Macek noted, the display of Croatian flags was illegal, but the gendarmes could not prevent it.

which had "no moral validity," and rejected the old Vidovdan constitution for being "voted without the Croats." A provisional fundamental law was outlined, which called for a freely elected constituent assembly to undertake the reorganization of the state. To prevent repetition of past injustices, the new constitution required majority approval by the deputies representing each of Yugoslavia's three nations: Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.¹¹⁸

Events since 1935 had borne ample witness to Macek's power in Croatia, and his agreement with the Serb Opposition confirmed the glaringly obvious need to resolve the Croatian question. To this end, Paul and Prime Minister Milan Stojadinovic maintained contact with Macek throughout 1937 and halfway into 1938, but continued to seek a solution based on the 1931 constitution. Macek held his ground, however, insisting the constitution be rescinded as a prerequisite for Croatian cooperation.¹¹⁹

International developments during 1938 convinced Paul that Yugoslavia's Serb-Croat imbroglio urgently required solution. In March, the Anschluss placed Hitler's resurgent armies on Yugoslavia's northern border, significantly escalating tensions throughout Europe. The emerging pattern of military confrontation and territorial revision forced all states to look to their defenses,

¹¹⁸Markovic, 368-69.

¹¹⁹Branko M. Peselj, "Serbo-Croatian Agreement of 1939 and American Foreign Policy," Journal of Croatian Studies 11-12 (1970-71): 12. On Macek's behalf, Peselj maintained regular contact with Stojadinovic during this time period. Macek also met personally with the Prime Minister in January 1937, and with Prince Paul on a number of occasions throughout 1937-38. Macek distrusted Stojadinovic as a cynical opportunist, but eventually developed a good rapport with Paul. (See Macek, 178-79, 181; Hoptner, 130.)

and Yugoslavia's grievous internal divisions obviously weakened her politically and militarily.¹²⁰ The autumn Munich crisis clearly emphasized the dangers posed by dissatisfied minority groups; the analogy between the Croats and the Sudeten Germans was not exact, but it was too close for Paul to ignore comfortably. The military implications of the Munich crisis were even more immediately pressing, for Yugoslavia was bound by the Little Entente to intervene if Hungary attacked Czechoslovakia.¹²¹

Given the ominous developments in foreign affairs, Macek's continued domestic successes dramatically increased his political leverage. He visited Belgrade in August 1938 to conduct talks with the Serb Opposition, and was greeted there by a crowd 100,000 strong. Paul had thought Macek would see that a majority of Serbs firmly supported the Stojadinovic regime, but the enthusiastic reception gave obvious cause to doubt this thesis.¹²² General elections held in December 1938 visibly reaffirmed Macek's strength, as had the 1935 elections. But this time, the Opposition

¹²⁰The U. S. War Department had long harbored grave forebodings about the effect of Yugoslavia's nationalities problem on her readiness for war. A 1932 report all too accurately predicted: "Early or material reverses may result in the defection of a considerable portion of the army." War Dept. to State Dept., Jul. 10, 1932, 860h.30/5, M1203-9.

¹²¹Hoptner, 114-19. (For Macek's explicit use of the Sudeten parallel as a negotiating tactic, see ch. 2 of the present study.)

¹²²Macek, 181-82. Hugh Seton-Watson estimated the crowd at 50,000. In either case, this was a huge reception for a Croat leader in the Serb capital. (See Seton-Watson, 236.)

list headed by Macek received 45% of the vote, which amounted to a major setback for Stojadinovic.¹²³

Significant popular support clearly existed for the restoration of full democracy and an accommodation with the Croats, but Stojadinovic posed an obstacle to initiating the process. He had never seriously pursued a reconciliation with the Croats, and had retained Prince Paul's support only due to his skillful conduct of foreign policy. By 1938, however, Stojadinovic was assuming the authoritarian tastes and trappings of the dictators Yugoslavia was forced to appease. When Paul learned from Count Ciano that Stojadinovic had even engaged in discussions on an Italo-Yugoslav partition of Albania, he decided to move against his Prime Minister.¹²⁴

Stojadinovic provided Paul a pretext on February 3, 1939, when he failed to respond to anti-Croatian statements made by a cabinet member in the Skupstina. Forced by ensuing cabinet resignations to reconstitute his government, Stojadinovic submitted his resignation to Prince Paul. The prince regent accepted his resignation but

¹²³Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 110; Seton-Watson, 236; Macek, 183-85. Macek contends the elections, which took place under the 1931 electoral law requiring open voting, were rigged by the government's henchmen. Dragnich does not rule this out, but he gives more space to Stojadinovic's allegations of voter coercion by C. P. P. partisans.

¹²⁴Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 109-13; Hoptner, 121-27. For details on Stojadinovic's growing fascist proclivities and the Albanian annexation scheme, see Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, ed. Malcolm Muggeridge, trans. Stuart Hood (London: Odhams Press, 1948), 268-71; Viktor von Heeren to Auswärtiges Amt, Nov. 17, 1938, Foreign Office/ State Department German War Documents Project, National Archives Microfilm Publication T-120, roll 310/ frames 235385-86.

refused to entrust him with the formation of a new government. Instead, Paul selected Dragisa Cvetkovic for the task. His mandate: resolve the Croatian question.¹²⁵

Cvetkovic faced the daunting task of bringing unity to two peoples whose common past gave some cause for hope, but much cause for doubt. Serbs and Croats had developed separate national identities prior to 1918, but a complex combination of geographical, political and ideological factors provided strong impetus toward unification in a common state. The form of this state was a point of irreconcilable difference, however. Serbian centralist and Croatian (con)federalist concepts were mutually exclusive, but were seen by their respective exponents as vital to national survival; compromise was therefore not possible. The struggles over this issue paralyzed Yugoslavia's political development, and opened a yawning chasm of bitterness and distrust between the two nations. By 1939, there was a broad consensus that the Serb-Croat impasse required resolution. King Alexander's attempt to impose unity had failed. It was time to see if a negotiated solution could succeed.

¹²⁵Hoptner recounts in some detail the Serbian chauvinist rhetoric which apparently triggered the cabinet crisis, but the source for his account is not clear. Dragnich's version varies dramatically; he asserts only a passing reference was made to any Croatian issue. Whether the pretext was thin or not is beside the point, however, for Paul had other good reasons to be rid of Stojadinovic. (Hoptner, 128-29; Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 111.) The foreign political implications of Stojadinovic's ouster are discussed in ch. 2 of the present work.

CHAPTER 2

THE PROCESS OF AGREEMENT: FEBRUARY - AUGUST, 1939

The process of negotiating the Sporazum proved a tortuous affair, whose episodic nature puzzled and dismayed many contemporary observers. Certainly, Yugoslavia's citizens watched the talks with a great deal of interest, as did the foreign diplomatic and press corps whose respective interests entailed gathering, assessing, and reporting information on these crucial developments. Combined with other primary and secondary sources, these reports offer valuable insights which are key to an assessment of the Sporazum. For the form, content, and progress of the negotiations, and the domestic and foreign tensions which impelled them, provide context essential to any interpretation of the end product.

Indeed, study of the troubled negotiations process affords a view of significant errors of omission and commission on both sides, Serb and Croat. Macek's periodic threats to secede or provoke foreign intervention, combined with the aforementioned dilatory pace of the talks, did much to undermine public faith in the good will of the negotiators. The exclusion of the Serb Opposition from the process further eroded trust in various quarters, as did the promulgation of the Sporazum as a temporary measure under constitutional law. The very real threat of Axis aggression served as the direct impetus of the negotiations, and ultimately contributed

to the final error in the accords process: the provisional nature of the Sporazum itself. This series of errors, exacerbating past ones from which they arose, laid the groundwork for the eventual failure of the Sporazum to achieve its primary goal: to unite the peoples of Yugoslavia in a common front against the possibility of Axis aggression.

To negotiate the agreement with the Croats, Prince Paul selected Dragisa Cvetkovic to replace Stojadinovic as Prime Minister on February 3, 1939. Paul chose Cvetkovic, a rather minor figure in Yugoslav politics, due to his long record of positive political contacts with the Croatian Peasant Party and its president, Vladko Macek.¹ The latter indeed acknowledged publicly to the foreign press that the dismissal of Stojadinovic was a signal that Paul was prepared to work towards a settlement. In the same interview, however, Macek also made several ominous statements:

I believe international developments have convinced the Regent that it is perilous for the kingdom to delay the solution of this problem. . . . He knows that he could not mobilize an army in this region [Croatia]. The parallel between our position and that of the Sudeten Germans is too close to be ignored.

Prague's persistent denial of peaceful demands for autonomy led at last to the German annexation of the Sudetenland. If war comes and our claims are not settled or on the way to settlement, there is no authority to prevent Croatia from cutting loose from the only two bonds we now recognize--the dynasty and the natural frontiers. . . .

. . . This is an occupied territory, and it is for those who have taken our liberty away to make the first advances.²

¹ Jacob B. Hoptner, Yugoslavia in Crisis: 1934-1941 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1962), 129-30.

² New York Times, Feb. 12, 1939, sec. 1, p.33 (Late City Edition). (Hereafter cited as "NYT." All are Late City Edition, unless otherwise stated.)

Macek went on to say the regent could count on complete cooperation from the Croats in negotiating a settlement, as long as the government's "methods [were] acceptable." He demanded dissolution of the government as well as new, free elections to a constituent assembly which would reorganize the state on a federal basis. Further, Macek stated the Croats "cannot recognize even a freely elected Parliament representing the present system." The Croat leader declined, however, to elucidate the extent of self-government he would seek in the negotiations.³

This interview highlights a number of brisant issues which were of importance in negotiating the Sporazum, while illustrating the sweeping, but frustratingly vague, nature of Croat demands. At the time of these statements, Europe was still reeling from the recent Munich crisis. Macek's tactics were intended to strike an exposed nerve among government circles, as well as the Serb population in general, by invoking the specter of foreign intervention in this manner. His assertion that Croats would not respond to a military mobilization order was certainly no empty threat in a small state which had post-Anschluss Germany on its northern border, and an increasingly belligerent Fascist Italy to its west. Macek's open threat to secede if war came prior to a settlement was an even bolder move, bordering on treason. His treatment of these issues was guaranteed to make most Serbs seethe with a sense of anger and betrayal, and reinforced suspicions that their Croat brethren were extortionists and potential traitors.

³NYT, Feb. 12, 1939, sec. 1, p.33.

Among his own Croatian constituency, Macek's statements reinforced already well-established feelings of total alienation from Belgrade, strengthening sentiments that "freedom" from Serb domination was to be achieved at any price. Finally, Macek's assertion that the regent was motivated by the exigencies of the international situation nourished Croatian suspicions that Belgrade was acting in self-interest and bad faith. The apocalyptic and accusatory tone of this interview was not atypical within the context of the interwar Serb-Croat dispute, but such a negative legacy would bear bitter fruit for Serb and Croat alike. This and similar pronouncements were a major factor in weakening the fragile foundations of mutual trust which the Sporazum represented.⁴

Still mindful that the regent had commissioned him to reach an accord with the Croats, Cvetkovic assumed a positive and conciliatory tone in his initial policy declaration to parliament. In this February 16th address, Cvetkovic announced that "Yugoslavia's domestic policy [would] receive an entirely new orientation in the direction of an understanding with the Croats," as the country's "most important problem remain[ed] the solution of the Croat

⁴Macek's threatening references to foreign intervention were recurrent; at the time of the Anschluss, he had called for "democratic intervention" by the West. On another occasion, he announced the Croats would hail Mussolini, Hitler, or Chamberlain--whoever influenced the Serbs to grant them autonomy within Yugoslavia. Such tactics were standard procedure with Macek and his predecessor, Stjepan Radic. (See "What Will Happen to Yugoslavia?," Contemporary Review [London], 156 [July 1939]: 50-51; J. F. Hendry, "Yugoslavia and the Future of the Balkans," Nineteenth Century and After [London], 125 [June 1939]: 683.)

question.”⁵ Cvetkovic indicated his goal: a new atmosphere of tolerance and mutual understanding. On this basis, the complete equality of Serbs and Croats in the state was to be achieved.⁶

In Macek's eyes, Cvetkovic's speech was significant, representing the first time in Yugoslavia's history that the very existence of the "Croat Question" was officially recognized.⁷ Certainly, Cvetkovic's clear intention to address the problem as his government's main priority was a portent of momentous changes to come, and his recognition of past inequities was itself a meaningful olive branch of reconciliation. The public and official nature of this address served to focus the eyes of Yugoslavia and the world on the crucial issue of Serb-Croat accord, while setting a precedent for the glare of publicity which surrounded the early negotiations.

This publicity, while perhaps understandable and even necessary as a morale booster, developed into another detrimental factor affecting the Sporazum. To the extent that the final product did not offer solutions which satisfied new-found expectations, it became a new source of bitterness between Serb and Croat.

⁵NYT, Feb. 18, 1939, p. 3.

⁶Sir Ronald H. Campbell to Foreign Office, Feb. 17, 1939, Public Record Office, London, Foreign Office file number R1251/20/92. (Hereafter, citations will refer to "FO" and "PRO." All file numbers given are those of the Foreign Office.)

⁷Vladko Macek, In the Struggle for Freedom, trans. Elizabeth and Stjepan Gazi (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, Publishers, 1957), 186. American diplomats in Yugoslavia had used this formulation as least as early as 1924 (Dodge to State Dept., May 10, 1924, 860h.00/209, National Archives Microfilm Publication M358, roll 3, Records of the Dept. of State, RG 59, National Archives, Washington, D. C.). Admittedly, the term assumed a more pregnant meaning in post-Munich Europe.

Additionally, the limelight illuminated an emerging pattern in which each new international crisis led to the conspicuous intensification of negotiations. This trend led many Croats to doubt that genuine good will was an operative force in the process of agreement--an understandable, but flawed, conclusion. External danger was indeed the immediate cause of Paul's determination to negotiate with the Croats, but he also harbored a bona fide desire to resolve the problem fairly. Many Serbs, for their part, perceived this pattern as further evidence that the Croats exploited the bogey of external danger to extort concessions. This conclusion, though justified, unfortunately overshadowed the sincere loyalty Macek displayed to post-Sporazum Yugoslavia.

Cvetkovic's address to parliament also indicated no forthcoming changes in Yugoslavia's foreign policy of friendship with its neighbors and the Great Powers.⁸ Interestingly, Germany's Minister to Yugoslavia, Viktor von Heeren, had predicted this would be the case; in a despatch to the Auswärtiges Amt (Foreign Office) reporting the fall of Stojadinovic, he opined:

A fundamental change of course in Yugoslavia's present foreign policy is practically outside the realm of possibility in light of current power politics [in der heutigen machtpolitischen Lage]. Up to a year ago, the fall of Stojadinovic would have been viewed as signaling a change in course of great consequence in foreign affairs. Today, even Paris and London can have no illusions as to its purely domestic significance.⁹

⁸Sir Ronald H. Campbell to FO, Feb. 17, 1939, PRO, R1251/20/92.

⁹Viktor von Heeren to Auswärtiges Amt, Feb. 8, 1939, Foreign Office/ State Department German War Documents Project, National Archives Microfilm Publication No. T-120, roll 310/ frames 235389-91. (Hereafter cited as "A. A." and "GWDP". All GWDP translations are mine.)

Heeren thus accurately indicated some of the realities shaping Yugoslavia's geopolitical situation as negotiations for the Sporazum impended. After the Axis successes in Austria and the Sudetenland, Yugoslavia's cautious accommodation of Germany and Italy appeared increasingly advisable--even inescapable.¹⁰

The actual intentions of the Axis partners towards Yugoslavia in early 1939 show her worries were justified. At a diplomatic reception for Stojadinovic in January 1938, Hitler had given personal and repeated assurances of Germany's desire for a strong Yugoslavia.¹¹ This was indeed the case at the time; Yugoslavia's economic dependency on Germany provided eminent cause for the Fuehrer's satisfaction. Stojadinovic's authoritarian proclivities also seemed to provide an "ideological foundation" to the "exceedingly friendly relations" between the two countries.¹²

The dismissal of Stojadinovic, however, caused Heeren to recommend a modification to Germany's heretofore benevolent policy. In early March, 1939, he interpreted Stojadinovic's ouster as "the conscious abandonment of authoritarian government." Since the

¹⁰Hoptner, chap. 5 passim.

¹¹Documents on German Foreign Policy: 1918-1945, series D, vol. 5, doc. 163: Heeren memo of Hitler-Stojadinovic conversation, Jan. 17, 1938. (Hereafter cited as "DGFP.")

¹²*Ibid.*, docs. 158 and 159: Carl Clodius memoranda Jan. 3 and Jan. 7, 1938. Clodius, Deputy Director of the Economic Policy Department in the Auswärtiges Amt, reported in Jan. 1938 that Germany had ranked first in Yugoslavia's foreign trade, both import and export, since 1937. Hoptner details the successful German economic penetration of Yugoslavia (among other states in Eastern Europe) achieved under Dr. Hjalmar Schacht, President of the Reichsbank, from 1936-39. By 1939, Germany absorbed some 50 percent of Yugoslavia's foreign trade. (Hoptner, ch. 4 passim.)

Croats were assuming a new importance in Yugoslavia, Heeren thought it "expedient to revise our attitude on the Croatian question." In light of these new developments, "the fear that by siding with the Croats we should endanger the authoritarian regime which we welcome in Yugoslavia has become meaningless." Heeren considered that offering the Croats moral support, as well as relaxing German press restraints towards the Croatian issue, would "bear abundant fruit."¹³

Italy's attitude towards Yugoslavia and its Croatian question was likewise affected by the fall of Stojadinovic. Mussolini and his foreign minister, Count Ciano, saw it as a threat to their cherished goal of an Italian-occupied Albania; nevertheless, the Duce decided on February 5th to pursue the project regardless of Yugoslavia's internal situation. Should Stojadinovic return to power, Italy would partition Albania with Yugoslavia as previously agreed. If his ouster proved lasting, Italy planned to proceed alone against Albania--and even against Yugoslavia, should the latter attempt to intervene. Only two days later, the Duce and Ciano agreed to accelerate the timetable of their Albanian gambit; as Stojadinovic was now definitively out of power, the Italian decision-makers wanted to strike before Yugoslavia had time to strengthen contacts with Britain and France.¹⁴

The surprise German occupation of rump Czechoslovakia on March 15, 1939 served to focus Mussolini's thoughts specifically

¹³DGFP, D, vol. 5, doc. 310: Heeren to A. A., Mar. 7, 1939.

¹⁴Galeazzo Ciano, The Ciano Diaries: 1939-1943, ed. Hugh Gibson (New York: Doubleday & Co., 1946), 22-24. (Hereafter cited as "Ciano Diaries.")

upon Croatia. He feared his planned invasion of Albania would shake Yugoslavia's government so badly that an independent Croatia, under German suzerainty, could result. Should Macek declare independence and request German protection, an apprehensive Mussolini imagined himself faced with two gloomy options: either fight Germany, or be swept away by a revolution led by his own Fascist party. In his opinion, "no one would tolerate the sight of a swastika in the Adriatic."¹⁵

As a result of these apprehensions, Ciano initiated a series of high-level contacts with the Reich on the 17th of March. He informed Germany's ambassador to Italy, Hans Georg von Mackensen, that the Duce was disturbed by rumors of German intentions towards Croatia. Should Macek appeal for Berlin's help, Italy could not manifest the same detachment it had displayed towards the late occupation of Czechoslovakia. Further, Italy and Germany had both been pursuing a policy of status quo in Yugoslavia; Italy considered this a "fundamental factor in the equilibrium of Central Europe" and expected its continuation. Ciano additionally invoked the Fuehrer's long-held view that Germany had no interest in the Mediterranean or the Adriatic, and averred that Italy "intend[ed] in future to consider [the latter] as an Italian sea."¹⁶ Mackensen's report of this conversation also indicated Ciano had admitted Italy's past support for the Croatian autonomy movement, but emphasized current Italian interests were served by a strong Yugoslavia.¹⁷

¹⁵Ciano Diaries, 44-46.

¹⁶Malcolm Muggeridge, ed., Ciano's Diplomatic Papers, trans. Stuart Hood (London: Odhams Press, 1948), 276-77. (Hereafter cited as "Ciano Papers.")

¹⁷DGFP, D, vol. 6, doc. 15: Mackensen to A. A., Mar. 17, 1939.

Within several days, Ciano received word from both Mackensen and Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop assuring him the Fuehrer fully concurred with Italy's position on Croatia. Germany promised never to act except in "closest cooperation with Italian wishes." Italy's options regarding Croatia were accordingly left open by Germany's declaration of désintéressement, should the Croat autonomy question develop similarly to recent events in Czechoslovakia.¹⁸

In actuality, Ciano had already begun to develop the option of subverting Yugoslavia. On March 20th, the very day he was receiving Mackensen's assurances of German good will, Ciano received the engineer Amadeo Cernelutti. Presenting himself as Macek's emissary, Cernelutti described the Croatian agenda as the continued pursuit of autonomy negotiations with Belgrade. Should the negotiations fail, however, the Croats would revolt and subsequently appeal for Italian military assistance. The desired end result in this case was a personal union with Italy. Cernelutti also indicated the Croats were anti-German, but would accept German assistance if Italy were not supportive of their aspirations.¹⁹

¹⁸DGFP, D, vol. 6, doc. 45: Mackensen to A. A., Mar. 20, 1939, and doc. 55: Ribbentrop to Ciano, Mar. 20, 1939. Ribbentrop also issued a circular reserving all decisions on contacts with minorities in Mediterranean countries to the Foreign Ministry. The directive stated: "Italy's intentions should exert a decisive influence on Germany's attitude. . . . In the interests of German-Italian relations, connections with Croat organizations must on no account be maintained in the future." (Italics mine.) DGFP, D, vol. 6, doc. 94: Mar. 25, 1939.

¹⁹Ciano Diaries, 48-51.

Mussolini directed Ciano to accept this proposal, and the latter informed Canelutti the next day that Italy would intervene at the request of the Croat government if negotiations failed and a revolt ensued.²⁰ Macek later denied sending Canelutti on this perfidious mission, and there is no evidence available which conclusively establishes their true relationship; thus it remains unclear whether Macek was indeed engaging in treasonous activities.²¹ Italy's declared readiness to intervene militarily in Croatia is, however, positively demonstrated.

From the accession of the Cvetkovic government in early February until the middle of March, 1939, Axis intentions towards Yugoslavia had thus vacillated with dizzying speed. Italy foresaw potential nightmare scenarios of war against Yugoslavia over Albania and war against Germany over independent Croatia. Therefore, Mussolini settled on supporting the status quo in Yugoslavia--while covertly cultivating options to intervene in Croatia if it seemed opportune. Germany had cautiously evolved from a cozy relationship with Stojadinovic, through keeping a "weather eye" on possible opportunities in Croatia, to deference to Italian regional primacy.

Such policy swings, as well as Italy's commitment to backing a potential Croat revolt, demonstrate that Yugoslavia was rightfully fearful of Axis intentions. The situation was obviously fluid, however, and the intrigues of various genuine and counterfeit

²⁰Ciano *Diaries*, 48-51.

²¹Macek, 187; Hoptner, 139-41.

Croatian representatives who approached Axis officials served to heighten the tension.²² Official circles in Yugoslavia were doubtless unaware of many of these schemes, but they were certainly aware of Italian interest in Croatia. Belgrade sent the Marquess of Bombelles, in the guise of a Croatian separatist, to meet with Ciano on two occasions in March.²³ Information from Bombelles, British warnings of a possible Italian invasion to "restore order" in Yugoslavia,²⁴ and Macek's ominous February interview with the foreign press all combined to give Prince Paul abundant indication of the possible consequences of continued dissatisfaction among the Croats.

Aware of the increasing danger posed by these domestic and foreign events, the government had been working behind the scenes during February and March to arrange negotiations with the Croats.²⁵ The lack of more visible and concrete action in pursuit of the Cvetkovic government's acknowledged *raison d'être* is at first striking. Indeed, in conjunction with later delays which ensued, the impression arose that the government, and thus the Serbs, were not acting with an appropriate sense of concern. As Macek declared: "It surprises me, though, that even after what has happened in the last few days [the absorption of rump Czechoslovakia] the Serbs do not

²²DGFP, D, vol. 6, doc. 55: Ribbentrop to Ciano, Mar. 20, 1939; doc. 205, unsigned record of conversation between Field Marshal Göring and Mussolini, Apr. 15, 1939; Ciano Diaries, 39-40.

²³Ciano Diaries, 39-40, 55.

²⁴Hoptner, 141-42.

²⁵Alex Dragnich, The First Yugoslavia: Search for a Viable Political System (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983), 114-16.

realize this is the twelfth hour.”²⁶ Ironically, Macek himself was apparently a primary cause of delay. Using Ivan Subasic as an emissary to contact Prince Paul in several preliminary meetings, Macek had met each government concession with increased demands.²⁷

In further mitigation of the government’s apparently deliberate approach in the scheduling of formal talks, one must consider United States Minister Arthur Bliss Lane’s assessment of the problem. Lane thought Croat autonomy a two-edged sword which could result in unified Serb-Croat resistance to aggression, or alternatively provide Germany with an opportunity to grab Croatia. Macek’s ultimate intentions were unknown.²⁸ His previous outbursts about foreign intervention were only too well known, though; viewed from this perspective, a mid-March trip to Prague by Macek’s trusted associate Kosutic appeared genuinely ominous.²⁹

Finally, Cvetkovic contacted Macek at the end of March and arranged to open formal negotiations. Two fundamental weaknesses were built into the negotiations process at this initial stage which were never overcome. From the government’s standpoint, the legal basis for the talks was provided by Article 116 of Yugoslavia’s 1931

²⁶NYT, Mar. 18, 1939, p. 2.

²⁷Sir Ronald H. Campbell to FO, Feb. 27, 1939, PRO, R1436/20/92. Campbell distastefully referred to Macek as an “obstinate little lawyer” who might repudiate the whole process to gain tactical advantage. See also Foreign Relations of the United States, vol. 1 (1939), 82: Lane to State Dept., Mar. 20, 1939. (Hereafter cited as “FRUS.”)

²⁸Lane to State Dept., Mar. 16, 1939, 860h.00/991, M1203-3.

²⁹FRUS, vol. 1, 82: Lane to State Dept., Mar. 20, 1939.

constitution. Article 116 authorized the crown to issue temporary decrees (pending final parliamentary approval) in the public interest, or in situations threatening the public peace or safety of the state. The temporary nature of decrees promulgated on this basis would subsequently cause many Serbs and Croats, for a variety of reasons, to question the legality of the Sporazum.³⁰

Macek, for his part, was negotiating as president of the Croatian Peasant Party and acknowledged leader of the Croatian people. Contrary to a New York Times report, however, Macek was not negotiating on behalf of the United Opposition.³¹ He therefore proposed an adjournment after the initial meetings of April 3rd and 4th to discuss coordination with his allies of the Serb Opposition. At Macek's behest, Kosutic journeyed to Belgrade to offer the Serb parties two options: either accept Prince Paul (through Cvetkovic) as representative of their interests, or agree on terms with Macek. In the latter case, Macek would then negotiate on behalf of the United Opposition. The rejection of both proposals by the Serb Opposition left Macek alone to negotiate a *modus vivendi* with the crown,³² in

³⁰Branko M. Peselj, "Serbo-Croatian Agreement of 1939 and American Foreign Policy," Journal of Croatian Studies 11-12 (1970-71): 20-24; Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 123.

³¹NYT, Apr. 3, 1939, p. 7.

³²Macek, 188. Hoptner speaks of Kosutic's trip as occurring after the later, more substantive, talks of mid-April. He details Kosutic's discussion with the Opposition leaders based on a personal interview with Milan Gavrilovic, an Agrarian Party participant. Either Hoptner or Macek may have incorrectly established the sequence of events, or it is even possible that they are referring to two different attempts to gain Opposition support. (See Hoptner, 150-51.)

violation of obligations undertaken to the United Opposition in the 1935 and 1938 election campaigns.³³

This failure to secure broader political participation in the proceedings proved a major hindrance to the Sporazum's eventual acceptance among Serbs. The resulting purely Croatian national basis of Macek's mandate, combined with the juridical questions which would arise regarding Article 116, were seriously prejudicial flaws in the process of accord.

During the recess in the Cvetkovic-Macek talks, Italy struck a blow which further increased the pressure on Yugoslavia. Having determined that Yugoslavia would not offer any resistance to such a maneuver,³⁴ Italy invaded Albania on April 7, 1939. Under the stress of these events, Prince Paul sent his children to England on the 11th; that night, feeling isolated and helpless, he broke down and wept.³⁵ The German Legation in Belgrade predicted with brutal accuracy the effect of Italy's strike on Yugoslavia's foreign policy: Today's outer calm and passivity is nothing more than a result of the crippling feeling of impotence.

³³Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 116, 121. Dragnich correctly concludes that the extent to which Macek sought to persuade Paul to include the United Opposition is unclear, but that the latter "very early concluded that Macek was acting incorrectly and subsequently that it had been betrayed." Macek also violated the Peasant Democratic Coalition agreement of October 8, 1937. (See text of this agreement in Lazar Markovic, "The Yugoslav Constitutional Problem," Slavonic and East European Review [London] 16, [1937-1938], 368-69.)

³⁴Ciano Diaries, 55, 58, 60. Ciano's conversations with Hristic, Yugoslav Minister in Rome, Mar. 29, Apr. 2, and Apr. 6, 1939.

³⁵Neil Balfour and Sally Mackay, Paul of Yugoslavia: Britain's Maligned Friend (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1980), 168.

Yugoslavia's relationship to the Axis Powers today is determined not by inclination, but by fear.³⁶

In this forbidding climate of Axis menace, Macek and Cvetkovic resumed negotiations on April 15th. In the following sessions, the two began establishing a framework to define Croatian autonomy. These first official talks focused upon two key issues: definition of an autonomous Croatian territorial unit and the corresponding delegation of its governmental and administrative competencies.

The territorial question was complicated by several factors. Under the constitution of 1931, King Alexander had reorganized the country into nine administrative units (banovinas) in an attempt to suppress national particularisms based on historic boundaries.³⁷ Historically and ethnically Croatian territories were thus divided among several banovinas, and any adjustment would be accordingly complicated. The definition of "historic" Croatian territory was itself hotly disputed; this was especially the case in Bosnia-Hercegovina where Serb and Croat nationalists fundamentally disagreed over the national identity of the inhabitants.

By their fourth meeting, on April 27th, Cvetkovic and Macek were nevertheless able to agree to combine the Savska and Primorska banovinas with Dubrovnik to form a core Croatian territory. Plebiscites were to resolve the disposition of several additional areas, including Bosnia and Hercegovina.³⁸ The division

³⁶Unsigned memo from Belgrade Legation to A. A., Apr. 13, 1939, GWDP, 310/235400-01.

³⁷Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 83. As "banovina" is an accepted term in English-language historiography, it will not be italicized hereafter.

³⁸*Ibid.*, 116. See also Macek, 188; Hoptner, 150.

of governmental competencies was similarly resolved in elastic terms. The central government was to retain control of the military and the conduct of foreign affairs, while the detailed division of governmental and administrative functions was to be deferred.³⁹

News reports had avidly, if not always accurately, followed the progress of negotiations, and the New York Times triumphantly announced "Basic Agreement Reached on Croats" on its front page of April 27th. This article noted optimistically that "the Croat problem was virtually settled today," a development it rapturously welcomed as "probably the greatest political event since little Serbia . . . became first the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and then Yugoslavia."⁴⁰ Articles written during the course of the negotiations had often mentioned the key behind-the-scenes role of Prince Paul; a piece on the 29th praised the "capital part" he had played, as well as his "perfect objectivity."⁴¹

As events turned out, however, Prince Paul's objections to the territorial provisions of the April 27th Cvetkovic-Macek agreement

³⁹Sir Ronald H. Campbell to FO, May 8, 1939, PRO, R4066/20/92. This despatch enclosed the "alleged" text of the agreement. It also called for constitutional guarantees of the Croatian banovina, coalition government, Serb-Croat reciprocity, and equality of confession. Macek's memoirs only say that further joint government was to require decision before final signature. Hoptner's source is a personal interview with Macek, and states that a constituent assembly was to be elected to accomplish reorganization of the state. (See Macek, 188-89; Hoptner, 150.)

⁴⁰NYT, Apr. 27, 1939, p. 1.

⁴¹NYT, Apr. 13, 1939, p. 13; Apr. 18, p. 5; Apr. 27, p. 1; Apr. 29, p. 5. The diplomatic world, and Macek himself, had of course long been aware that Paul was the real power on the government's side in the talks. (See Freundt to A. A., Apr. 8, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613326-28; Sir Ronald H. Campbell to FO, Feb. 27, 1939, PRO, R1436/20/92; Macek, 189.)

precipitated a crisis. As Paul related to Sir Ronald Campbell, he rejected the idea of plebiscites throughout Bosnia and Hercegovina, and had countered with a proposal for referendums to be held in a year's time in fourteen specified districts.⁴² This counterproposal was transmitted via Ivan Subasic, whom Macek had dispatched to Belgrade after several days passed without response from the government.⁴³

In reply, Macek published a letter to Cvetkovic in the Hrvatski Dnevnik (Croatian Daily), the Croatian Peasant Party newspaper. In this letter he alleged the submission of new terms constituted the regency's rejection of the April 27th agreement. Three days later, on May 8th, the Croatian National Assembly published a manifesto supporting Macek's stance and praising the desire of the Serbian people for an accord. While also thanking the Great Powers for their spirit of friendly facilitation, the manifesto squarely blamed the government for the failure of the process.⁴⁴

The New York Times reported the failure of the talks had caused a "sensation" on Belgrade, while crowds in Zagreb shouted: "We want the agreement" and "Down with those who oppose it."⁴⁵ Alfred Freundt, German Consul in Belgrade, reported the collapse of

⁴²Sir Ronald H. Campbell to FO, May 8, 1939, PRO, R4066/20/92.

⁴³Freundt to A. A., May 9, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613333-35.

⁴⁴Sir Ronald H. Campbell to FO, May 8, 1939, PRO, R4066/20/92. This despatch includes a translation of the Croatian Natl. Assembly (C. N. A.) resolution. The C. N. A. was an unofficial body, comprising Croatian representatives elected to, but boycotting, the Skupstina. Macek was its President. (See also Freundt to A. A., May 9, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613333-35.)

⁴⁵NYT, May 6, 1939, p. 3; May 9, p. 8.

the "optimistically publicized" (verheißungsvoll angekündigte) negotiations might lead to the government's resignation.

Additionally, Freundt noted he was combatting false rumors that Germany had pressured Belgrade to reject Croat demands, seeking to profit from Serb-Croat tensions. To counter the rumormongers, he was emphasizing that "Germany desires a united, internally consolidated Yugoslavia, in whose internal affairs she shall not interfere."⁴⁶ Italy, busily digesting Albania, maintained its policy of watchful waiting.⁴⁷

Sir Ronald Campbell, analyzing the failure of the negotiations, asked the obvious question: how did it occur that Cvetkovic agreed to conditions which the regent could not support? He felt it possible that the Prime Minister had exceeded his brief, but concluded something had likely occurred to "stiffen" Paul's stance. Paul told Sir Ronald he had been:

Warned by the Patriarch, by his military advisers, and by numerous numerous official and private bodies that to hand over to Croatia large districts not exclusively Croat would provoke something like a revolution in Serbia.⁴⁸

Although other sources do not mention anything of a possible revolution, it is generally agreed some influential combination of Serbian parties opposed the April 27th accord, and the status of

⁴⁶Freundt to A. A., May 9, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613333-35.

⁴⁷With Sporazum negotiations in full swing on Apr. 20th, Mussolini noted that "no one wants the dismemberment of Yugoslavia." On May 2nd, Ciano observed: "We have no intention of doing anything that might weaken the unity of the [Yugoslav] state." Albanian irredentist claims to Kosovo could, however, later provide a "dagger thrust into the back of Yugoslavia." (See Ciano Diaries, 69, 76.)

⁴⁸Sir Ronald H. Campbell to FO, May 8, 1939, PRO, R4066/20/92.

Bosnia-Hercegovina appears to have been the key.⁴⁹ Clearly, the level of resistance to an accommodation with the Croats was serious, even though many Serbs felt an accord was imperative.⁵⁰

Sir Ronald's despatch of May 8th also pointed out, in a more general way, something of the gravity and scope of the problems which underlay the whole issue of Serb-Croat relations. He believed:

Had the Serbs shown in the past a greater understanding of the problem and more will to solve it on an equitable basis, it would admittedly never have assumed the acute form which it takes today. It is no longer a quarrel between two branches of the same race: it has become the revolt of a people, who style themselves a separate nation, against the detested rule of Belgrade.⁵¹

Campbell considered the Croats had not been given a "square deal," and could thus sympathize with them. However, he feared Macek's claims upon "every district where there is a Croat

⁴⁹According to Hoptner, Macek thought resistance came from two quarters: Bosnian leader Mehmed Spaho's fear of the partition of Bosnia and Hercegovina, and position-conscious Serb politicians. Dragnich attributes resistance to Spaho, Bosnian Serbs, military fears of a federal structure weakening national defense, and Paul's belief that the international situation provided momentary breathing room. U. S. Minister Lane thought General Staff apprehensions of a weakened national defense the main cause for the breakdown of talks, while Heeren believed the plebiscite issue the main reason. (See Hoptner, 151; Dragnich, *First Yugoslavia*, 117; Lane to State Dept., May 6, 1939, 860h.00/1033, M1203-3; Heeren to A. A., May 19, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613336-38.) As Paul was particularly close to Sir Ronald (Balfour, 169-70), the latter's account might well be the most accurate. Excepting the unique element of possible revolution, Sir Ronald's despatch is also consistent with the others.

⁵⁰For example, Belgrade students went on strike May 13th, declaring that a "fraternal accord" was a "fundamental condition for the defense of the country." (*NYT*, May 14, 1939, p. 17.)

⁵¹Sir Ronald H. Campbell to FO, May 8, 1939, PRO, R4066/20/92.

minority" had made "it is impossible for the Regency to concede without incurring the active hostility of the Serbs. It is useless to settle the Croatian problem by creating a Serbian one. . . ." ⁵²

A number of elements in Campbell's despatch help illustrate the variety of often contradictory agendas which arose in the first round of negotiations. Paul was definitely interested in increasing the internal soundness, and thus the external security, of the state. On the other hand, he hesitated to approve major changes, as he saw his role primarily as that of caretaker until King Peter reached his majority. Also, the worrisome possibility remained that Croatian autonomy could actively tempt the Germans to intervene. Although the prince regent believed Macek to be loyal, numerous indications implied the latter might possibly strike a deal with the Axis.

Many other Serbs also felt the tug of opposing desires; they supported the basic idea of an accord with the Croats, but Serb and Moslem leaders both feared the repercussions of Croat absorption of parts of Bosnia. Finally, the General Staff surfaced grave concerns about Croatian autonomy weakening the national defense, but Macek's public utterances emphasized worse consequences if negotiations failed. In this inauspicious atmosphere of irresolution and rancor, set within the context of twenty years of Serb-Croat strife, Ministers Campbell and Lane were doubtless not the only ones who feared an eventual agreement would prove insufficient to effect true reconciliation. ⁵³

⁵²Sir Ronald H. Campbell to FO, May 8, 1939, PRO, R4066/20/92. Campbell disdainfully blamed Macek, "who in the grave circumstances of the hour has conducted himself much as a peasant negotiating the sale of an acre of land."

⁵³Ibid.; Lane to State Dept., May 4, 1939, 860h.00/1040, M1203-3.

Lane also noted the slackening pace of negotiations as the pressure of international events eased, contrasting it to the intense efforts exerted under the influence of the Axis occupation of Czechoslovakia and Albania. He observed, through diplomatic channels, that which the international press had publicly declared since the accession of the Cvetkovic government: external dangers were a primary motive for a Serb-Croat accord.⁵⁴ Macek's apocalyptic utterances served only to reinforce these impressions.

Clearly, by the time negotiations broke down in May, they were accurately identified as part of Yugoslavia's strategy to confront the external danger by appeasing the danger within. The ensuing hiatus in discussions persisted through May and much of June, thus increasing these perceptions. Ultimately, many Serbs felt blackmailed, while many Croats considered that concessions wrung from a reluctant government represented neither secure gains, sincere apologies, nor sound bases for future development.

The standstill in the accords process also provided motive and opportunity for nefarious attempts to undermine it altogether. Although Germany and Italy made no specific provisions regarding Yugoslavia in their May 22nd Pact of Steel,⁵⁵ Ciano did discuss Croatia with Ribbentrop and Himmler. With Italian supremacy of interest in Croatia reaffirmed,⁵⁶ Mussolini and Ciano felt able to

⁵⁴This theme was the leitmotif of New York Times reports on Sporazum negotiations. See NYT, Feb. 12, sec. 1, p. 33; Feb. 18, p. 14; Mar. 18, p. 2; Mar. 29, p. 14; Apr. 2, Sec. IV, p. 4; Apr. 8, p. 4; Apr. 12, p. 4, Apr. 13, p. 13; Apr. 16, p. 36; Apr. 27, p. 1; Apr. 28, p. 9.

⁵⁵DGFP, D, vol. 6, doc. 426: Pact of Friendship between Germany and Italy.

⁵⁶Ciano Diaries, 85. Ribbentrop favored the status quo, but Himmler urged

strengthen their contacts with the shadowy figure of Carnelutti upon their return to Rome. The latter, purportedly Macek's agent, informed Ciano that the Croat leader had definitively decided to reject any agreement with Belgrade. During a May 26th meeting, Carnelutti and Ciano coordinated detailed arrangements for an Italian-supported Croat rebellion. It was to take place within six months and result in Croat autonomy under Italian rule. Mussolini and Ciano were both enthusiastic about this program, but decided to obtain Macek's countersignature to validate the agreement.⁵⁷

Though Macek later admitted meeting Carnelutti, he gave a radically different version of the draft agreement the latter presented for signature. All accounts agree, however, the end result was the same: Macek unconditionally refused to sign.⁵⁸ According to Macek, radical Frankists thereafter hotly criticized his traitorous refusal of this opportunity to achieve an independent Croatia.⁵⁹

Although this second incident with Carnelutti again fails to conclusively prove underhandedness on Macek's part, it reinforces the proof of real danger which Italy's aggressive designs posed for Yugoslavia. Further, one begins to see shadowy outlines of the aggressive radical elements in the Croatian national movement--elements which eventually had a major impact on the Sporazum's effectiveness in Yugoslavia.

Ciano to lose no time in establishing Italy's protectorate over Croatia.

⁵⁷Ciano Diaries, 86-88.

⁵⁸Macek, 189-90; Ciano Diaries, 91.

⁵⁹Macek, 190.

Certain circles in Serbian politics also took advantage of the caesura in negotiations to take actions which proved stumbling blocks for the Sporazum. On June 12th, Stojadinovic supporters in parliament presented the government with an interpellation demanding information about its talks with Macek. This document, signed by 83 members of the Skupstina and 20 Senators, was pointedly formulated to challenge both the government and the reconciliation process. Its twelve questions implied the government's acknowledgment of Croatian national individuality and territory would engender a "Serbian Question," which would then require solution on the same basis. These developments, it insinuated, would endanger national unity and the existence of the state.⁶⁰

Though Cvetkovic was able to defeat this challenge with the assistance of the Bosnian and Slovene parts of his coalition, the Serbian component was significantly weakened.⁶¹ Heeren accurately foresaw that the party split instigated by Stojadinovic could provide the nucleus of a Great-Serb reaction if negotiations for a Sporazum should fail.⁶² Cvetkovic, however, exhibited confidence in his comments to the press, reaffirming his mandate to seek a "reconciliation between the Serbs and Croats."⁶³ Macek

⁶⁰Heeren to A. A., June 15, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613341-44.

⁶¹Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 117.

⁶²Heeren to A. A., Jul. 11, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613347-49. Although negotiations of course ultimately succeeded in achieving an agreement, Serb dissatisfaction would constitute a major obstacle to its acceptance. The interpellation affair surfaced, and probably stoked, Serb unease about the Sporazum.

⁶³NYT, Jun. 9, 1939, p. 10.

echoed this positive note, telling the Yugoslavenska Posta: "Despite actions by certain elements--overt and covert--Serb-Croat reconciliation will be achieved."⁶⁴

The prince regent missed the opening salvoes of the Stojadinovic interpellation affair, as he was paying a state visit to Germany in early June. During eight days of talks with the German leadership, Paul apparently concluded that war over Danzig was certain. Additionally, although Hitler was sparing no expense or effort to impress Paul favorably,⁶⁵ his heavy-handed attempt to gain Yugoslavia's unequivocal support of the Axis was far from reassuring. As Ribbentrop recorded the Fuehrer's argument:

Such a definition of attitude would consolidate Yugoslavia's internal position at a stroke. As soon as it became known that the Axis Powers were a hundred per cent in support of maintaining Yugoslavia in her present form, and advocated the maintenance of the status quo, Croat and Slovene separatists would cease their efforts of their own accord, as they would then have to realize that all hopes of help from without were futile.

. . . If there were no such certainty [regarding Yugoslavia's attitude towards the Axis], it was impossible to predict what impulsive step the Duce might not one day take.⁶⁶

Had Paul still entertained any doubts about the Croatian question's potential as a facilitator for Axis aggression against Yugoslavia, this "cordial" interview must certainly have put them to rest.

At the end of June, Macek once again proved both his awareness of the danger which Serb-Croat discord posed for Yugoslavia and his

⁶⁴NYT, Jun. 17, 1939, p. 5.

⁶⁵Balfour, 175, 178-79; Hoptner, 148-49

⁶⁶DGFP, D, vol. 6, Doc. 474: Ribbentrop memo of Fuehrer's reception for Paul, Jun. 7, 1939.

willingness to use it to further his ends. On June 29th, Dr. Juraj Krnjevic, the Secretary General of the Croat Peasant Party, delivered a memorandum on Macek's behalf to the British Foreign Office. This document protested Prince Paul's rejection of the April 27th agreement, declaring that "Croat confidence in the good faith and loyalty of Belgrade was destroyed." It continued that Macek no longer believed direct negotiations with Belgrade promised success, thus he called on Great Britain to "take the solution of the conflict between Croatia and Serbia into her hands." Should Britain decline to do this, Macek wished to know if she would "extend her protection to an independent Croatia." Krnjevic's memorandum asserted Macek was "fully aware of the consequences for Yugoslavia of a revival of the struggle between Croatia and Serbia in the present international situation."⁶⁷

In contravention of the memorandum's dire declarations, Macek accepted the government's offer to resume conversations in late June. This time, Macek and Cvetkovic met at a secluded location to avoid the glare of publicity that had surrounded the April talks.⁶⁸ Another, more fundamental, difference in the negotiations process was also inaugurated in this phase of the talks: each side appointed three experts to undertake detailed arrangements for the division of

⁶⁷FO Minute (Mr. E. M. B. Ingram), Jun. 29, 1939, PRO, R5341/20/92. The signed memorandum by Krnjevic is enclosed. The British declined to act, of course; in accordance with diplomatic custom, they had even refused any direct contact with Krnjevic. The memo was therefore delivered by an intermediary.

⁶⁸ Terence Shone to FO, Aug. 13, 1939, PRO, R6548/20/92. Hoptner asserts the experts worked throughout June and July, while Macek states that talks were resumed several weeks after the second Carnelutti affair of late May. (See Hoptner, 152; Macek, 190.)

competencies between autonomous Croatia and the state. Macek and Cvetkovic remained available to hammer out compromises when deadlocks arose. This methodology allowed the negotiators to address major questions which the April talks were forced to defer entirely--an approach they agreed had been strewn with pitfalls.⁶⁹

An even more substantial measure of progress was Macek's acceptance of the principle of a territorial settlement without plebiscite, thus avoiding the shoals on which the April agreement had largely foundered. Other fundamental issues were regulated in late July when Macek dropped his previous demands for a constituent assembly to reorganize the state--a radical restructuring which the regent was unwilling to accept. A compromise formula was agreed upon, whereby an eventual settlement would be promulgated by royal decree under Article 116 of the existing constitution. Before the decree would be submitted to the Skupstina for ratification, however, the current Skupstina would be replaced by one elected under a new electoral law. In this manner, the regent's constitutional concerns were satisfied, yet Macek gained the promise of a freely and fairly elected parliament.⁷⁰

The Independent Democrats, Macek's partners in the Peasant Democratic Coalition, chose this time to sponsor a final attempt to include the Serbian Opposition in the conferences. A meeting between Macek and Milan Grol of the Serbian Democrats again failed, however, to achieve any satisfactory results.⁷¹ Despite this major

⁶⁹Macek, 190-91.

⁷⁰Shone to FO, Aug. 13, 1939, PRO, R6548/20/92.

⁷¹Macek, 191.

shortcoming, an overall atmosphere of optimism pervaded the press reports during July. Speculation was rife that significant progress portended an early and successful end to the talks.⁷²

The mood of optimism was shattered at the beginning of August by a new deadlock and Macek's resultant public outburst.⁷³ This time the Croat leader threatened to secede from Yugoslavia if his autonomy demands were unfulfilled, though he acknowledged such a move would "probably mean a world war." Conceding that Croatia would probably require a protectorate should it secede, Macek stated: "All right--Germany then--let her come and make order. Some one must make order in Yugoslavia. If Belgrade cannot make order in Yugoslavia, Germany can." Macek blamed the "Belgrade clique" of Army generals for the breakdown of the autonomy talks. He concluded Yugoslavia's survival depended upon its reorganization as a "United States of Yugoslavia," comprising "equal states of Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia."⁷⁴

Reports from Krnjevic in Geneva reached Macek shortly thereafter, though, which convinced him that the outbreak of a European war was indeed imminent. Under these circumstances,

⁷²NYT, Jul. 9, 1939, p. 24; Jul. 26, p. 20; Jul. 28, p. 5.

⁷³The control of the Gendarmerie was the issue which broke up the talks. The gendarmes were the most visible instrument of central state authority, and were passionately resented in Croatia. U. S. Minister John Prince had previously described them as "trained to regard violence and brutality as inseparable from efficiency." (See Hoptner, 152; Shone to FO, Aug. 13, 1939, PRO, R6548/20/92; Prince to State Dept., Jun. 12, 1933, 860h.00/640, M1203-2.)

⁷⁴NYT, Aug. 2, 1939, p. 10. It is not clear how Macek intended to treat Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and the Vojvodina; however, the proposal clearly foresaw the reduction of Serbia's size and strength.

Macek decided to resume negotiations, now telling Cvetkovic that he was prepared to accept a provisional agreement which could be revised later. Whether motivated by Macek's secessionist threats, the worsening Danzig situation, uncertainty over Italian military preparations, or a combination thereof, Cvetkovic accepted this concession with alacrity. Macek and Cvetkovic also decided to closet themselves with the experts beginning on August 16th, resolving not to emerge until an agreement was drawn up.⁷⁵

On the basis of this newly agreed commitment to success, as well as upon the very tangible proceeds of the July discussions, the negotiations entered their final phase. Macek and Cvetkovic remained at their task until August 20th, producing an agreement which Prince Paul signed on the 23rd.⁷⁶ The agreement was announced in an official communiqué of the 24th, and the necessary implementing decrees were promulgated on the 26th.⁷⁷

The long-awaited Sporazum was now law in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and it represented a significant achievement. It was a provisional agreement promulgated on a temporary basis, however, and successful implementation required much additional hard work and cooperation. Certainly the accord was cause for hope, but the

⁷⁵Macek, 191-92; Hoptner, 153-54. Hoptner dismisses Macek's threats as a motivating factor in the resumption of talks, and credits the international situation only. In this author's opinion, these threats (as well as the preceding ones) were an integral factor shaping the government's interpretation of the external danger. Macek, after all, was Croatia's acknowledged leader; his threats, whether genuine or a mere tactic, could be expected to affect Croat reliability in a crisis.

⁷⁶Macek, 192; Hoptner, 154.

⁷⁷NYT, Aug. 25, 1939, p. 2; Aug. 27, p.1

legacy of mistrust, aggravated by shortcomings in the negotiations process, proved a serious handicap. In the face of the mounting external dangers, the Sporazum proved unequal to the task. An examination of the agreement and its implementation is the next step in explaining why.

CHAPTER 3

THE LIFE AND DEATH OF THE SPORAZUM: AUGUST 1939 - APRIL 1941

The Sporazum was awaited in some quarters as the solution to Yugoslavia's Serb-Croat dispute. Its designers, however, had more modest goals. Their immediate aim was the amelioration of the Croatian question in order to present a unified front to the Axis threat. In pursuit of this aim, they intentionally adopted a provisional agreement under the pressure of impending war. However, the negotiators also sought to frame the accord as a genuine first step toward long-term solutions to state structure and the national question. Indeed, to do less was an impossibility, for these concepts were the very essence of the Croatian question.

But long-standing domestic mistrust, exacerbated by the problematic negotiations process, greatly impeded the implementation of the Sporazum. These problems reflected fundamental conflicts between competing Serbian and Croatian concepts of state organization and territorial demarcation. Cornerstones of their respective national ideas, these conflicts were only provisionally addressed by the Sporazum, because true compromise was unachievable without altering the essence of the competing national programs. Large segments of public opinion supported--even demanded--the Sporazum, but neither side was prepared to make further sacrifices on fundamental issues.

The ensuing impasse prevented the orderly development of the reconciliation process, and thus negated the Sporazum's potential as a transition mechanism for the consensual modification of the unitary Yugoslav state. The Sporazum's failure as a vehicle for long-term political evolution only accentuated the national divergencies which caused the deadlock. The difficulties of reconciliation radicalized national feeling among Serbs and Croats alike, undermining support for the leaders responsible for the settlement.

A summary of the Sporazum's major provisions illustrates the provisional quality which underlay later difficulties, while nonetheless showing the accord as a praiseworthy attempt to address questions of state reorganization and the Croatian national program. The overriding consideration of national defense, so noticeable during the negotiation phase of the Sporazum, was implicit in the document's opening paragraph, which asserted "Yugoslavia is the best guarantee of the independence and progress of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes."¹ Article One further provided for Croatian participation in a common government. This government was to oversee the transfer of powers to Banovina Croatia² on the

¹ See Appendix 1 for an English translation of the Sporazum's text.

² T. C. Rapp, British Consul in Zagreb, was informed by local contacts in Aug. 1939 that "Banovina Croatia," not "the Croatian Banovina," was the correct English translation of the Serbo-Croatian term "Banovina Hrvatska." (See Terence Shone to Foreign Office, Aug. 13, 1939, Public Record Office, London, Foreign Office file number R6548/ 20/92. [Hereafter cited as "FO" and "PRO." All file numbers are those of the Foreign Office.]) "Banovina Croatia," or simply "Croatia," are commonly accepted terms in English-language historiography, and will be used here.

basis of Article 116 of the constitution, and to make necessary preparations for the reorganization of the common state.

Article II tentatively defined the territory of Banovina Croatia as comprising the Savska and Primorska banovinas, plus eight additional districts from other banovinas.³ The definitive boundaries were to be fixed after the reorganization of the state, based on "economic, social, geographical and political circumstances," whose due consideration could result in the detachment of some villages not possessing a Croat majority.

The Sporazum's third article guaranteed the political equality of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, as well as equality in state employment. It additionally assured equality of religious confessions and basic civil rights.

Article IV addressed the division of powers between the state and Banovina Croatia. The latter received control of agriculture, commerce and industry, forests and mines, public works, social services, public health, physical education, justice, public education, and internal administration, plus a separate budget. Other areas, most significantly the military, foreign affairs, finance and central administration, remained within the competency of the state. Definitive regulation of jurisdictions was deferred until the final reorganization of the state.

³The additional districts came from four other banovinas; in terms of traditional regional designations, the districts lay in Slavonia, Dalmatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina. (See Jozo Tomasevich, The Chetniks, [Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1975], 23.)

Article V established a Croatian legislature (Sabor), to be comprised of democratically elected representatives. This body shared legislative authority with the crown in affairs delegated to the Banovina. A governor (Ban), serving at the king's pleasure, exercised executive authority on behalf of the crown, and was responsible to both crown and Sabor.

The final article of the Sporazum guaranteed protection of the Banovina's position by special constitutional laws which were to be inalterable without its consent. The government was also obligated to issue new laws regarding the press, the right of assembly, and elections.

The regent issued several important decrees in conjunction with the Sporazum's promulgation on August 26th. Fulfilling a condition specified by Macek, Paul repealed the undemocratic electoral law of 1931 and dissolved the existing parliament elected under its provisions.⁴ Additional decrees authorized the government to modify the political laws addressed in Article VI of the Sporazum, and provided for the eventual extension of the Sporazum to other areas.⁵ This eventful day also saw Dr. Ivan Subasic named Ban, and a new coalition government sworn in. Five

⁴Terence Shone to FO, Oct. 2, 1939, PRO, R8460/20/92. Shone was First Secretary of the British Legation in Belgrade.

⁵Peter Garran (Belgrade Legation) to FO, Aug. 28, 1939, PRO, R6970/20/92. The decree providing for the Sporazum's eventual extension was mentioned, but not included in this despatch; this oversight was eventually corrected in Feb. 1940. (See Mr. Ronald I. Campbell to FO, Feb. 3, 1940, PRO, R1847/89/92. His predecessor, Sir Ronald H. Campbell, left Belgrade in October 1939.)

members of the Croat Peasant Party joined the new Cvetkovic government, including Macek in the position of Vice Premier.⁶

The Sporazum, its associated decrees, and the inclusion of Croats in the government clearly represented a significant attempt to establish a basis for national reconciliation in Yugoslavia. Initial reactions by the foreign press tended to stress its positive aspects, as shown by the New York Times headline on August 27th: "Yugoslavs Regain Democratic Rule." This and succeeding articles emphasized the favorable response within Yugoslavia itself, describing jubilation in Zagreb and Nis (Serbia), as well as the enthusiasm shown by the press of both sides.⁷ One piece observed the "foreign political situation has played an important part in bringing about the understanding," and reported a "general feeling" in Belgrade and elsewhere "that the Serb-Croat accord means that Yugoslavia will defend [her independence] to the end."⁸

Newsweek noted the impetus provided by external events, implying the Sporazum was "rushed through" as a result of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 22nd. Such oversimplification suited the indignant tone of the article, which portrayed the international results of the dictators' diplomatic bombshell.⁹

⁶Shone to FO, Oct. 2, 1939, PRO, R8460/20/92.

⁷New York Times, Aug. 27, 1939, p. 1; Aug. 28, p. 7; Aug. 29, p. 5; and Aug. 30, p. 3. (Hereafter cited as "NYT." All are Late City Edition, unless otherwise cited.)

⁸*Ibid.*, Aug. 29, 1939, p. 5.

⁹ "Worried Balkans: Policies of Small Nations Upset by Moscow-Berlin Pact," Newsweek, Sept. 4, 1939, 21.

For the wrong reasons, the Newsweek article arrived at the right answer, or at least part of the answer. For Prince Paul was certainly convinced by mid-July that Hitler would fight for Danzig, and that the Nazis would therefore make an accommodation with the Soviets if the Allies did not do so first.¹⁰ Paul was indeed rushing to complete the Sporazum before the outbreak of war, but in his eyes a possible Nazi-Soviet Pact was simply one more signal that war over Danzig was certain. He was acting on these premises long before the Pact became a reality, however. The Sporazum and the Nazi-Soviet Pact were thus related, but not in the manner which Newsweek implied.

As had Newsweek, the London Times commented approvingly on the adoption of democratic reforms, reporting Yugoslavia's positive reception of the Sporazum and its complementary decrees. "Public demonstrations of joy" were reported in Zagreb, while large crowds were noted welcoming Macek upon his arrival in Belgrade.¹¹

Time offered a contrast to the upbeat tone of the other Western news reports, gloomily recalling Macek's earlier threat to "go our separate ways" if no agreement were reached. Noting Macek's threats and the past "ruthlessness of Serbian repression, [which] gave Croats the reputation of being one of the worst-treated

¹⁰Paul told U.S. Minister Lane in conversations on July 12th and 15th that war was certain. Several days later, Joseph Kennedy, U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St. James, reported Paul had warned Prime Minister Chamberlain about a probable Nazi-Soviet Pact. (See Foreign Relations of the United States [FRUS], vol. 1 [1939], 198-99: Lane to State Dept., Jul. 16, 1939; and 287-88: Kennedy to State Dept., Jul. 20, 1939.)

¹¹London Times, Aug. 28, 1939, p. 12; Aug. 29, p. 9.

minorities in Europe," Time interpreted the Sporazum as a "reluctant" agreement between Yugoslavia's "quarreling factions" under the shadow of Nazi aggression. It pessimistically concluded both Serbs and Croats "had been too late too often to make their sporazum [sic] mean much."¹² This conclusion eventually proved correct.

The British journal Contemporary Review likewise emphasized the causal connection between recent German aggression and Yugoslav reconciliation. However, it saw the Sporazum as a "radical transformation" introduced "in the nick of time," and ventured to hope it represented "lasting internal peace" for Yugoslavia.¹³

Since these various Western periodicals clearly viewed Germany as the true threat to Yugoslavia's independence, they would probably have been surprised to read the positive assessment of the Sporazum offered by the German periodical Nation und Staat (Nation and State). This Viennese publication appraised the division of jurisdictions between state and Banovina as one which, in large measure, could satisfy Serb and Croat alike. The Sporazum brought the country a degree of internal tranquility never attained since its unification, while also providing a "significant consolidation of Yugoslavia's international position." On the whole, the accord "satisfied the preconditions for a definitive solution of the Serb-Croat conflict." The author apparently saw no irony in evaluating

¹² "Sporazum," Time, Aug. 28, 1939, 25.

¹³ Barbara Ward, "Reconciliation and Neutrality in Yugoslavia," Contemporary Review (London), 156 (Nov. 1939): 562-70.

Germany's occupation of Austria and Czechoslovakia as the proximate cause of Serb-Croat accord!¹⁴

Nation und Staat's approval of the Sporazum reflected Germany's desire for Yugoslavia as a stable, reliable source of supply in the fall of 1939. For following his blitzkrieg through Poland, Hitler's attention was turning towards France; he wanted no Balkan distractions during this stage of the war. The German minority in the Slavonian region of Croatia likewise welcomed the Sporazum, but for more immediate reasons. As their ethnic newspaper Slawonische Volksbote reported, the Serbo-Croat accord promised to relieve the pressure on the German minority, which had occupied an "unspeakably difficult buffer position" for twenty years.¹⁵

With the exception of Time magazine's pessimistic evaluation of the Sporazum as a tardy agreement between reluctant partners, the assessments of foreign periodicals generally shared an optimistic and favorable view of the Serb-Croat accord. The approbation expressed by Western sources reflected the fundamental bias underlying their interpretations of Yugoslav events: in August and September 1939, they--and their governments--welcomed any measures which apparently improved Yugoslavia's ability to resist the German juggernaut. Paradoxically, Hitler's strategy also benefited from Yugoslav stability in the autumn of 1939. Thus, the

¹⁴Arnold Weingärtner, "Die Serbisch-kroatische Verständigung," Nation und Staat (Vienna) 13 (Oct. 1939): 8-13. (All translations mine.)

¹⁵Hans Bertram, Slawonische Volksbote, Sept. 2, 1939, in "Zur Lösung der kroatischen Frage," Nation und Staat (Vienna) 13 (Oct. 1939): 34-35.

press of both sides welcomed the Sporazum, but for diametrically opposing reasons.

An examination of periodicals published in the first weeks following the Sporazum reinforces the already demonstrated connection between external events and the reconciliation process. More importantly, this literature clearly demonstrates that the public perceived this connection. For the perception itself prejudiced Croat acceptance of the Sporazum; indeed, press reports (mostly filed from outside Croatia) of Croat jubilation proved inaccurate, as an analysis of diplomatic despatches will show. Reports that Serbs joyously welcomed the agreement were correct, however, and add weight to other evidence that they saw it as a security measure accomplished barely in time. Their obviously profound relief is the best evidence of the terrible uncertainty they felt in August 1939, and is one key to understanding the depths of disillusion which were to come.

Contemporary diplomatic correspondence echoed public awareness of the connection between the Sporazum and European events which was so evident in press commentary. The diplomats shared the general optimism of the press to a much smaller degree, however. For by virtue of their positions, training, and political experience, the diplomats were much more capable of accurately assessing the settlement's strengths and weaknesses. They rapidly identified many of the accord's shortcomings, as well as sources of popular discontent, which proved fateful for Yugoslavia's future.

F. D. W. Brown of the British Foreign Office immediately noted the vague formulation of the decree providing for eventual extension of the Sporazum to other areas. He was unclear if this portended the division of Yugoslavia into Serbian, Croatian and Slovenian political units, or if it meant the devolution of powers to the seven other existing banovinas. Brown also observed the failure to definitively resolve the territorial questions which had bedeviled the negotiations all along. Although he believed the accord "probably represent[ed] a fair compromise," it was "difficult to reach a concrete opinion" in view of its provisional nature: "much will clearly depend upon the way in which [the accord and associated decrees] are carried out."¹⁶

Viktor von Heeren's initial despatch to the Auswärtiges Amt (Foreign Ministry) noted the compromise nature of the Sporazum. Heeren thought its moderate terms represented an "inexpensive solution" of the Croatian question and thus a victory for Cvetkovic. Though he expected the settlement to reduce internal tensions markedly, Heeren also noted the dissatisfaction of some elements of Macek's party; he astutely opined the federalist trend could assume acute dimensions if European tensions relaxed.¹⁷

¹⁶F.D.W. Brown minute on Garran to FO, Aug. 29, 1939, PRO, R6970/20/92. Brown's brief analysis amplified Garran's despatch, which only transmitted the texts of the Sporazum and accompanying decrees.

¹⁷Viktor von Heeren to Auswärtiges Amt, Aug. 27, 1939, Foreign Office/State Department German War Documents Project, National Archives Microfilm Publication No. T-120, roll 1481/ frame D613355. (Hereafter cited as "A. A." and "GWDP." All translations are mine.)

Alfred Freundt, German Consul General in Zagreb, took a decidedly more pessimistic view of the Sporazum's prospects. Though he believed an "objective evaluation" showed it to be a "suitable basis" for an accord between Serbs and Croats, he thought it premature to speak of a "definitive solution." He noted the final negotiations were greatly influenced by the tense European situation of the preceding weeks, which Croats saw as the only reason the regency and the army were willing to compromise. This belief, strengthened by deep distrust resulting from years of struggle against Belgrade, made Croats generally doubt Serb intentions to implement the Sporazum in good faith.¹⁸

Referring to Macek's traditional demand that Croatia control its own finances and military, Freundt further reported a widespread feeling that the accord fell disappointingly short of the mark. The normally demonstrative Croats showed no public enthusiasm over the settlement, while Frankist radicals even denounced Macek as a traitor for agreeing to any terms short of independence. In response to the reproaches of one member of the Croatian National Assembly, Macek characterized the Sporazum as only a first step towards a final resolution of Croatian demands--even the boundary question remained to be settled. Freundt predicted the radical Croats would win ground against Macek in the forthcoming elections.¹⁹

Freundt's British counterpart, Consul T. C. Rapp, noted many of the same danger signals, but interpreted events more optimistically.

¹⁸Freundt to A. A., Sept. 2, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613356-59.

¹⁹Ibid.

He believed the initial lack of visible enthusiasm among Croats masked a "very deep satisfaction" with developments. In Rapp's opinion, Croats generally felt the accord formed a solid basis for a lasting solution, "if its provisions are loyally carried out by the Serbs." Croats, however, believed Serb cooperation depended upon the continuation of the external crisis which had precipitated the Sporazum. Radical Frankists criticized Macek for failing to exploit the international situation to full advantage, but Rapp thought them a limited factor "provided that the agreement becomes an effective instrument." Rapp was very encouraged by Macek's selection of men to accompany him into the new coalition government, as these were chosen from the Croat leader's most trustworthy associates.²⁰

These initial diplomatic reactions indicated several of the Sporazum's weaknesses. The provisional resolution of the key territorial question and the accord's vaguely-defined applicability beyond Banovina Croatia both portended future difficulties with the fundamental issues of boundaries and state organization. These shortcomings indeed proved to be critical obstacles for the Sporazum. Additionally, the first diplomatic assessments possessed two common threads: they all tied the accord intimately to the pressure of international events, nevertheless all agreed the

²⁰Unsigned memo from Belgrade Chancery to FO, Sept. 9, 1939, R7549/20/92. This memo enclosed Rapp's Sept. 6th report to the Belgrade Legation. Evidently Rapp was asked to explain why he believed the visibly reserved Croats were actually "deeply satisfied" with the Sporazum, for he attempted to do so at length in a later despatch. His explanations are contradictory, however; if anything, they further demonstrate Croat dissatisfaction. (See Shone to FO, Oct. 2, 1939, PRO, R8460/20/92.)

Sporazum was a reasonable basis for settlement. Obviously, the diplomats believed these elements were not mutually exclusive.

Both British and German consuls in Zagreb, however, correctly appreciated the grave misgivings felt by Croats toward an agreement achieved under such conditions. Many Croats were also clearly dissatisfied by an accord which fell short of their expectations, irrespective of considerations involving its eventual implementation. For in accepting the Sporazum, Macek had sacrificed large elements of the traditional Croatian national program, which called for broad administrative, financial, and military autonomy on the basis of a new constitution. Of these traditional Croat aspirations, Macek had achieved a great deal of administrative freedom for Croatia, but only limited financial autonomy. He gained major concessions towards democratization of political life, but his acceptance of Article 116 as the basis of the accord comprised the recognition of the hated 1931 constitution. The Sporazum granted the Croats no autonomy whatsoever in the realm of military affairs, which remained under the control of the state.

The consular reports mentioned two concrete manifestations of immediate Croat dissatisfaction with the Sporazum: the Frankists' activities and the lack of positive public reaction in Zagreb. Both manifestations were significant in interpreting Croat support of the Sporazum, for they marked fissures in Croatian solidarity under Macek's leadership. Zagreb, the preeminent urban center in Croatia, was the center of radical nationalism; it was

manifestly at odds with Macek and his Peasant Party by August 1939. From this point on, he gradually lost control of the party's right wing. By the crisis of April 1941, Macek could no longer ensure widespread Croatian obedience to his decisions.²¹

In spite of these nascent problems, September saw the new coalition government take important steps toward implementing the Sporazum. After initial delays, a royal decree established the administrative system of Banovina Croatia on September 9th, and the government concentrated on executing the transfer of powers to the new entity. Croat leaders focused their efforts on organizing and consolidating the new administration, and were generally satisfied with the government's efforts to assist the process.²²

The partial mobilization of Yugoslavia's armed forces in the autumn of 1939 proved a disastrous setback for the work of reconciliation, however. As has been shown, the issue of Yugoslavia's defense was intimately connected to the genesis of the Sporazum. Macek had invoked this concern in many forms, even

²¹A meeting of the Croatian Natl. Assembly on Aug. 29 "ratified" the Sporazum overwhelmingly. The sole dissenter, Dr. Susic, asserted large segments of Croatian society were dissatisfied with the Sporazum, as they did not yet have "their guns on their shoulders and their purse in their pocket." The first public displays of joy in Zagreb followed the "ratification." Consul Rapp's report indicated the celebrants were peasants, brought in at Macek's behest. After all, the Sporazum was "that of the Peasant Party, not of the bourgeois." Again, this emphasized Macek's weak support in the cities. (See Freundt to A. A., Sept. 2, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613356-59; Shone to FO, Oct. 2, 1939, PRO, R8460/20/92.)

²²Shone to FO, Oct. 2, 1939, PRO, R8460/20/92. Rapp's enclosed report noted some Croat reservations about Serb obstructionism, especially regarding financial matters, but observed "real appreciation" for the loyal efforts of Prince Paul and Cvetkovic.

threatening that Croats would fight against the Serbs in case of war.²³ Croatian sources in the military reinforced these fears. General Maric, the Croat commander of Yugoslavia's Fourth Army, intimated to German Consul Freundt in a 1936 conversation that the Croatian question required solution on grounds of military necessity, if for no other reason.²⁴

The Sporazum was proof that Serbs were deeply concerned about this very issue. In Freundt's eyes, though, the Serbs had wasted the intervening years, smugly believing they could ensure Croat support in a crisis by granting political concessions at the last minute.²⁵ His reports, confirmed by those of his British counterpart in Zagreb, illustrated that Croats were resentfully aware of this Serbian attitude. That many influential Serbs nonetheless believed the Sporazum assured Croat support in a crisis is perhaps surprising, but true.²⁶

²³"Sporazum," Time, Aug. 28, 1939, 25.

²⁴Freundt to A. A., Oct. 8, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613379-83.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Hoptner notes Prince Paul "seemed free of the worries that the Croatian question had caused him" in a Sept. 1939 conversation with the French Minister. U. S. Minister Arthur Bliss Lane reported being "told by all members of the Government that Serb-Croat accord has really succeeded in unifying the country and that it is unified now against a German aggression." Ivan Subbotic, Yugoslavia's Minister to the U. K., likewise informed the FO that the coalition government resulting from the Sporazum "would render it impossible . . . for any foreign country to take advantage of internal difficulties and dissensions in Yugoslavia." (See Jacob B. Hoptner, Yugoslavia in Crisis: 1934-1941 [New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1962], 170; FRUS, vol. 1 [1939], 404-05: Lane to State Dept., Sep. 1, 1939; Record of Conversation, P. Nichols (FO) and I. Subbotic, Aug. 28, 1939, PRO, R6896/20/92.)

The mobilization of some 500,000 troops for duty on Yugoslavia's northern borders in early September was thus a major test case for the Sporazum.²⁷ As British Consul Rapp observed:

It was no inconsiderable misfortune that the first result of the agreement appeared to the peasants to be the mobilization of most Croatian reservists in conditions of the grossest Serb incompetence. Having escaped . . . from Serb civil administration, the Croats were delivered tied and bound to their military counterparts. Suddenly, without warning, obedience to the Serb, instead of disobedience, became the watchword.

Rapp noted that Frankist radicals, among others, took advantage of the situation to exacerbate the discontent. Peasant Party leaders helped resolve the mutinous conditions arising in several locations, but one unit required disbandment.²⁸

Freundt agreed with Rapp's assessment that the mobilization followed too closely upon the promulgation of the Sporazum; the Croat peasant was simply unable to shed immediately the long tradition of resistance to Belgrade which had formed the cornerstone of Peasant Party doctrine. He also observed, with a keen eye for detail, the military incompetence which caused the Croatian reservists' morale to "sink to zero." The men had been mobilized during the harvest, only to be sent to camps which lacked any effective organization. Quarters, rations, equipment, and clothing were all totally inadequate; in short, "the most primitive provisions for the physical well-being of the troops were lacking." According to ex-officers of the Austro-Hungarian Army, these

²⁷FRUS, vol. 1 (1939), 420-21: Lane to State Dept., Sept. 9, 1939.

²⁸Shone to FO, Oct. 2, 1939, PRO, R8460/20/92.

horrendous conditions and the resulting collapse of military discipline exceeded anything they had experienced until the very end of the 1914-1918 War. In view of the disorders, the Fourth Army Commanding General reported his command unfit for combat--a report which cost him his post.²⁹

The largest single instance of mutiny occurred in Karlovac, where firing broke out when some hundreds of soldiers refused to entrain as ordered. American Minister Lane reported lesser disorders were widespread throughout Croatia, though, adding that "racial and linguistic differences have caused insubordination." Army requisitioning of draft animals, without compensation to the owners, spread the discontent even to those peasants who were not called to active service.³⁰

Instead of displaying the solidarity of Serb and Croat as brothers-in-arms ready and able to protect their common state, the military incompetence and indiscipline that marked the mobilization aggravated national frictions. The personnel structure of the Yugoslav Army emphasized the national ingredient in the witches' brew of discontent which surrounded the mobilization. The senior officers of the army were almost exclusively Serbs,³¹ thus any

²⁹Freundt to A. A., Oct. 8, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613379-83. Freundt agreed with the General's assessment.

³⁰Arthur Bliss Lane to State Dept., Oct. 7, 1939, 860h.22/38, and Oct. 11, 1939, 860h.22/39, National Archives Microfilm Publication M1203, roll 9, Records of the Department of State, RG59, National Archives, Washington, D. C.; Vladko Macek, In the Struggle for Freedom, trans. Elizabeth and Stjepan Gazi (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, Publishers, 1957), 196-97.

³¹Stevan K. Pavlowitch, "How Many Non-Serbian Generals in 1941?," East European Quarterly 16, no. 4 (1983): 447. The best available figures indicate

failures of an organizational nature were identified as "Serbian" incompetence. The territorial basis of the army's reserve forces,³² on the other hand, ensured the majority of reservists posted to the northern border were Croatian and Slovenian.³³ Therefore, disobedience within the ranks was readily identifiable by nationality--in this case, as "Croatian" insubordination.

In many ways, the fiascos of the 1939 mobilization foretold those of 1941 with frightening accuracy. Certainly, the widespread failures left a fresh legacy of nationalist bitterness and suspicion in their wake. For the grievances of Croat reservists and peasants were mirrored by those of Serbs who heard tales of Croat insolence to Serb officers.³⁴ The upper echelons of the army, apparently constrained by the new Croat presence in the government from taking draconian measures to enforce discipline,³⁵ began to fear the Croats as antistate subversives, or even German agents.³⁶ As a

Yugoslavia had 165 general officers on active duty in 1938, of whom 161 were Serbs, 2 Croats and 2 Slovenes. As Pavlowitch notes, Army lists were neither publicly available nor regularly produced. The 1938 list is the last known prewar compilation, and it did not identify the national origin of the officers--the ethnic breakdown given is based on analysis of names and circumstantial evidence. (See also Jozo Tomasevich, Peasants, Politics, and Economic Change in Yugoslavia [Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1955], 242.)

³²Lane to State Dept., Apr. 25, 1939, 860h.20/56, M1203-9. Lane observed "reservists are mobilized and assigned to military units nearest their homes."

³³Macek, 196.

³⁴Lane to State Dept., Oct. 25, 1939, 860h.00/1103, M1203-3.

³⁵Heeren to A. A., Oct. 30, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613387-88. Heeren stated the military authorities acted with a restraint which "would have been unthinkable prior to the Serb-Croat agreement."

³⁶Hoptner, 161.

result, Serb hopes of Croat reliability in a crisis were severely shaken. Croats, for their part, felt only renewed mistrust for Belgrade's motives. The contentions of both parties had strong justification. The mobilization mishaps of 1939 were more than an inauspicious beginning for the Sporazum--they were a damaging blow to its credibility.

The Croatian Peasant Party (C. P. P.) loyally supported the government during the autumn mobilizations, but its internal solidarity was further damaged in the process. As Zagreb's cool reception of the Sporazum showed, the C. P. P. was weak in Croatia's most important city; increased Frankist activities also bespoke the growth of radical strength. The military fiascoes certainly did nothing to convert these opponents of reconciliation with Belgrade, but they did a great deal to prejudice the already skeptical peasantry against the reconciliation process. Macek and his lieutenants insisted their party remained as cohesive as ever, but diplomatic observers saw disquieting signs to the contrary.³⁷ German Consul Freundt even asserted in his October 8th despatch that "many of the moderate Croat politicians see Dr. Pavelic . . .

³⁷Shone to FO, Oct. 30, 1939, PRO, R9649/20/92. According to Consul Rapp's enclosed Oct. 12th report, C. P. P. Secretary General Juraj Kmjevic blamed the mobilization disorders less on Frankist separatists than on anti-Sporazum/Great-Serb officers, as well as Communists. Rapp expressed confidence that Macek retained the loyalty of the peasants and the "acquiescence of most other classes." Shone's cover letter to Rapp's report found this reassuring, but felt Macek's entry into the government made intensification of Frankist activities inevitable. To counter rightist agitation, Macek's C. P. P. circular of Oct. 10th emphasized the corrective measures the party and government were taking to ameliorate the mobilization problems, praised the Sporazum's progress, and called for discipline and unity in the face of provocateurs of all stripes.

rather than Mr. [sic] Macek, as the true leader of the Croatian people."³⁸

Despite increasing indications of dissension within its ranks, Macek and his Peasant Party were still clearly the most cohesive political force in Yugoslavia. Croatian cohesion, and Macek's efforts to maintain it, engendered a defensive reaction among Serbian political parties which did much to stall the implementation of the agreement from November 1939 onwards. Combined with the pressures of European war, the Serb reaction created a deadlock in the Sporazum's development which was never overcome.

The issues which gave rise to the stalemate were those which the Sporazum only provisionally addressed: territorial delineation, extension of the accord's provisions to the remainder of Yugoslavia, and the free election of a new parliament. The regulation of these issues would dictate the future shape of the state, thus the stakes were obviously high. The new parliament would play a decisive role; in Macek's view, it would carry out the task of restructuring the state in accordance with the freely expressed will of the people. After this fashion, the parliament would functionally resemble the constituent assembly Croats had long desired. Macek therefore favored early elections to expedite the task of state reorganization.³⁹

The fractionalized Serb opposition parties were nearly unanimous in their desire to delay elections, however, though their

³⁸Freundt to A. A., Oct. 8, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613379-83.

³⁹Shone to FO, Nov. 20, 1939, PRO, R10537/20/92; Heeren to A. A., Dec. 3, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613389-91.

reasons varied somewhat.⁴⁰ Some, such as the two main Radical Party factions, refused to support any deviation whatsoever from a unitary state structure. Markovic's Radical faction supported the Sporazum, but argued Serb unity must be assured prior to elections. The Stojadinovic Radicals opposed the Sporazum as a violation of the unitary state, but felt it left them with one choice: the unification of all Serbs.⁴¹ The Democrats, bitter that Macek had negotiated without his allies of the Serb Opposition, stated "the Sporazum [*sic*] of August 26th was made without consulting the Serbian people," and denounced it as a threat to the position of Serbs in the state.⁴² They demanded the formation of a Serbian banovina before elections were held. The Agrarian Party accepted the Sporazum unenthusiastically; however, its left wing, resenting the Opposition's exclusion from the negotiations process, formed the separate National Peasant Party.⁴³ Whether they supported or opposed the Sporazum itself, none of these Serbian parties wanted to contest elections in their divided condition. Given the extent of

⁴⁰Shone to FO, Nov. 20, 1939, PRO, R10537/20/92; Heeren to A. A., Dec. 3, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613389-91.

⁴¹Alex Dragnich, The First Yugoslavia: Search for a Viable Political System (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1983), 125-27.

⁴²Hugh Seton-Watson report in Ronald Syme (Ministry of Information) to F. D. W. Brown (FO), Dec. 12, 1939, PRO, R11468/20/92. Syme's memo enclosed a Dec. 4th report from Seton-Watson, on assignment in Yugoslavia for the Ministry of Information. Seton-Watson was a renowned scholar of Balkan affairs, whose father Robert had maintained intimate contacts with leading Yugoslavs since 1908. (See Hugh Seton-Watson et al., eds., R.W. Seton-Watson and the Yugoslavs: Correspondence 1906-1941, 2 vols. [London: British Academy, 1976].)

⁴³Dragnich, First Yugoslavia, 125-26.

Serbian political disharmony, they feared elections would result in a victory for federalism in general, and the Croats in particular.⁴⁴

The fears of these Serbian political parties reflected and intensified the concerns of the populace, which generally supported the creation of a Serbian banovina.⁴⁵ Serb anxiety was given strong impetus by a number of events in Croatia. Rumors of the mutinous Croatian regiment in Karlovac were finally confirmed publicly in early November,⁴⁶ aggravating the dismay aroused by numerous murders of Serb former officials in Zagreb. Additional disquieting tales of Frankist activities were related by fearful Serbs fleeing Croatia.⁴⁷ By November, these various anxieties gave rise to calls for the government to address the "Serb Question," whose very existence was--incorrectly--denied by Cvetkovic.⁴⁸

Hugh Seton-Watson, a leading British scholar of Yugoslav affairs, traveled to Yugoslavia in the winter of 1939 to evaluate the

⁴⁴Shone to FO, Nov. 20, 1939, PRO, R10537/20/92; Heeren to A. A., Dec. 3, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613389-91.

⁴⁵Hugh Seton-Watson memo, in Ronald Syme to F. D. W. Brown (FO), Dec. 12, 1939, PRO, R11468/20/92.

⁴⁶NYT, Nov. 5, 1939, p. 35.

⁴⁷Press reports of approximately 20 murders of ex-officials in Zagreb were confirmed by Lane's report of "numerous shootings." Macek publicly appealed to Croats to put an end to the murders. Lane also described the "expulsion of Serbs from Croatia," although he offered no explanation of the causes. Heeren referred to the tales of frightened "Serbian 'emigrants' from Croatian districts." Shone reported the disquiet aroused by stories of mistreatment of Serbs and increasing Frankist activities. (See NYT, Oct. 11, 1939, p. 8, and Oct. 16, p. 4; Lane to State Dept., Oct. 26, 1939, 860h.00/1102, M1203-3; Heeren to A. A., Dec. 3, 1939, GWDP, 1481/D613389-91; Shone to FO, Nov. 20, 1939, PRO, R10537/20/92.)

⁴⁸Shone to FO, Nov. 20, 1939, PRO, R10537/20/92.

situation for the British Ministry of Information. His contemporary assessment of Serb apprehensions provided an insight into the moral-emotional aspects of the "Serb Question":

It [the Serbian people] feels that its glory has diminished, the glory which it won in the eyes of the world by its struggles from 1912 to 1918. Its pre-war democracy has gone, its military honour is forgotten, it sees the Croats united, strong, confident, progressively led, and itself helpless. Many Serbs have spoken to me in the last few days of the need "to restore the honour" of Serbia. Those who know a little of the history of Serbia know that this is not mere verbiage. (Italics mine.)⁴⁹

Serbian concerns clearly had a distinct emotional component of wounded national pride, but they were also founded in two valid political concerns: the questions of territorial delineation and state reorganization. In the months immediately following the Sporazum, these concerns led to calls for a Serbian banovina before any national elections. In March 1941, however, "Serbian honor" would again have a brief moment in the sun--with disastrous results for the Sporazum and for Yugoslavia.

Serbian demands for their own banovina emphasized the dangers inherent in the Sporazum's tentative boundary settlement. For the establishment of a Serbian territorial unit, on a national basis, entailed the division of lands claimed by Serb and Croat alike. The key issue was the disposition of Bosnia, over which Serb and Croat nationalists had bickered since the era of Garasanin, Karadzic, and Starcevic. According to Seton-Watson, most Serbs of "the former kingdom" demanded Bosnia's incorporation into the new Serbian unit, along with all other portions of Yugoslavia except

⁴⁹Hugh Seton-Watson memo, in Ronald Syme to F. D. W. Brown (FO), Dec. 12, 1939, PRO, R11468/20/92.

Slovenia. Many felt it only fair in view of Banovina Croatia's large Serb minority, whereas others feared "the bogey of all non-Serbs uniting to tyrannise them." As Seton-Watson observed, it was "almost impossible to separate thwarted democratic aspirations from Pan-Serb nationalism."⁵⁰

Serbs were predictably upset when Bosnian Moslem leader Dzaferbeg Kulenovic called for an autonomous Bosnia on November 7th. Such a proposal exacerbated the Serbian fears noted by Seton-Watson, plus it threatened to separate a further one million Serbs from their brethren.⁵¹ Arthur Bliss Lane noted that most of Yugoslavia's press--especially the Serb papers--reacted to the proposal with "howls of protest." Macek's newspaper also called it "impracticable and contrary to the welfare of Yugoslavia as a

⁵⁰Hugh Seton-Watson memo, in Ronald Syme to F. D. W. Brown (FO), Dec. 12, 1939, PRO, R11468/20/92. Hugh's father Robert W. Seton-Watson, writing for the Royal Institute of International Affairs in September 1939, estimated Banovina Croatia's population at 4,500,000. Of this figure, some 866,000 were Serbs. (See Hugh Seton-Watson et al., eds., R.W. Seton-Watson and the Yugoslavs: Correspondence 1906-1941, vol. 2 [London: British Academy, 1976], 364.)

⁵¹It is impossible to authoritatively compute the exact number of Serbs in Bosnia prior to World War II, since the census methodologies themselves were highly politicized and disputed. They have remained politicized since the war, though with different emphases. Census data from 1921, 1931, 1948 and 1961 are consistent enough to warrant acceptance of Hugh Seton-Watson's 1939 estimate of 1,000,000 Serbs in Bosnia-Herzegovina as approximately correct. This represented some 40-45% of Bosnia's population. (See Hugh Seton-Watson memo, in Ronald Syme to F. D. W. Brown (FO), Dec. 12, 1939, PRO, R11468/20/92; Ivo Banac, The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics [Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, 1984], 49-58; U. S. Bureau of the Census, International Population Statistics Reports, ser. P 90, no.5: "The Population of Yugoslavia," by Paul F. Myers and Arthur A. Campbell [Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1954], 52, 54 and 126-27; and Frits W. Hondius, The Yugoslav Community of Nations [The Hague: Mouton, 1968], 13.)

whole." Lane believed Macek's reservations concerned the proposed Bosnian boundaries, which included some districts granted to Banovina Croatia.⁵² Indeed, Macek publicly announced he would make no territorial demands if a banovina were created from the parts of Bosnia and Hercegovina not granted to Croatia by the Sporazum. Should Serbia incorporate parts of Bosnia, though, Croatia would demand an equal share.⁵³

Macek's statements were consistent with his essentially bipolar view of Yugoslavia, which led him to interpret issues in terms of Croat and Serb interests.⁵⁴ However, he was also working hard to hold the growing radical right wing within the Peasant Party; a soft stance on the issue of Bosnia would have been abhorrent to them. Terence Shone, First Secretary of the British Legation, believed Macek sincere in his efforts to "make the agreement work"; however, he feared the Croat leader was "losing a good deal of ground to the 'Frankovtsi' [Frankists] in Croatia." Macek was apparently "under a good deal of pressure from the more extreme elements in the Croat Peasant Party itself, who . . . may desert to the 'Frankovtsi' if Croatian hopes are disappointed."⁵⁵

⁵²Lane to State Dept., Nov. 22, 1939, 860h.00/1113, M1203-3.

⁵³Hoptner, 198.

⁵⁴Macek's approach was quite typical of interwar Yugoslavia, in which the struggle of the two largest component nations was the major domestic political issue. Further, he personally viewed Bosnia and Hercegovina as belonging to the "Croatian part of Yugoslavia." (See Macek, 25, 94, 163.)

⁵⁵Shone letter to P. Nichols (FO), Nov. 27, 1939, PRO, R11049/2613/67.

Seton-Watson was likewise struck by the influence of the radical elements in Croatia. The Frankist opponents of the Sporazum were centered in the University of Zagreb; though they had been "making a good deal of noise lately," he still thought them "not numerous enough to be dangerous." In Seton-Watson's opinion, the Peasant Party was "going to great lengths to placate these elements by insisting that it is no less nationalistic than the Frankovci, only politically wiser." He believed this rhetoric represented the party's attempt to prevent defection by certain "clerical, bourgeois and chauvinist [sic] elements within its ranks [to the] Frankovci." The publication of the party's statements in the Croatian press also provided Pan-Serbs with "proof that all Croats are really separatists at heart." Serb nationalist newspapers indeed responded vehemently, denouncing Macek as a Fascist leader who was organizing a system of anti-Serb terror in Croatia.⁵⁶

Seton-Watson accurately concluded the Sporazum faced two primary dangers: Croat extremists and Serb opposition. The latter comprised democratic elements seeking increased political freedom and social reforms, plus the "Pan-Serb politicians who wish to destroy the Sporazum [sic] and get back to power themselves." He

⁵⁶Hugh Seton-Watson memo, in Ronald Syme to F. D. W. Brown (FO), Dec. 8, 1939, PRO, R11331/20/92. The British Ministry of Information's Confidential Supplement of the Zagreb Press Report (Dec. 15, 1939) echoed Seton-Watson's assessment of the Croatian leadership's good will, and believed the peasantry stood behind its leaders. It reported a different attitude among "considerable sections" of the bourgeoisie, professional classes, and Zagreb students, however: "It is commoner to hear people in Zagreb remark complacently that the 'Sporazum [sic] was bound to fail' rather than to hear an expression of any determination to make it work." (See Syme to FO, Dec. 13, 1939, PRO, R11514/20/92.)

considered this possibility remote at present, "but it is possible in the next months." Seton-Watson did not draw any conclusions about the relationship between the Peasant Party's rhetoric and the growing radicalization of Croatian public opinion, but the connection cannot have been coincidental.⁵⁷

The interdependent issues of free elections and reorganization of the state were, by December, thoroughly bogged down in the mutual suspicions, recriminations and political maneuvers of a wide variety of contentious parties. Though Cvetkovic's Yugoslav Radical Union continued to work with Macek and his Croat Peasant Party towards consolidation of Banovina Croatia, the brisant issues of elections and state reorganization defied solution. Efforts to break the deadlock continued until at least April 1940,⁵⁸ but died out as the German offensives in the West precipitated a new series of challenges for Yugoslavia.

The impasse resulted from fundamental contradictions in the Serb and Croat national programs which the Sporazum had not addressed, much less resolved. Serbs were by no means convinced federalists; their primary motivation for seeking to establish a

⁵⁷Hugh Seton-Watson memo, in Ronald Syme to F. D. W. Brown (FO), Dec. 8, 1939, PRO, R11331/20/92.

⁵⁸Optimistic news reports in early Feb. 1940 forecast a break in the reorganization impasse, but none occurred; Macek still insisted on elections before reorganization, while Serb parties demanded the opposite. The long-awaited electoral law was promulgated in early April at Macek's insistence, but elections were never held. As Mr. Campbell observed, there existed a "serious danger that . . . the agreement would become an election issue in Serbia with consequences that could hardly fail to be harmful." (See NYT, Feb. 3, 1940, p. 2; Mr. Ronald I. Campbell to FO, Apr. 4, 1940, PRO, R4587/89/92; Nichols, Record of Conversation with Yugoslav Minister Subbotic, Apr. 1, 1940, PRO, R4095/89/92.)

Serbian banovina was defensive in nature. Many doubtless wished to maintain traditional Serb predominance in Yugoslavia; certainly, most were unwilling to risk possible marginalization at the hands of an alliance of Croat, Slovene and Bosnian banovinas. On these grounds the Serbs demanded their banovina comprise all of Yugoslavia, minus Croatia and Slovenia. The proposed boundaries also conspicuously resembled traditional Serbian expansionist goals.

Croats, however, were unwilling to accept a massive Serbian banovina which included historic Croatian territories in Bosnia and the Vojvodina. Additionally, a Serbian unit of such dimensions would have manifestly ensured the continuance of Serb supremacy in a restructured state. Each of these two reservations represented points on which Croat nationalists were unprepared to compromise.⁵⁹

Neither side was willing to compromise on the twin issues of elections and banovina boundaries, because oppositional conceptions of state organization and national territory were at stake. These competing conceptions were absolutely fundamental to their respective national ideas, and no consensus existed for the radical transformation of either. The Sporazum's promises of free elections and reorganization of the state thus remained unfulfilled. No new parliament took office in the time remaining to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. This broken promise exacted its toll in Croat dissatisfaction, as the hated 1931 constitution remained in force, with no visible prospect of its eventual modification. The inability

⁵⁹Branko M. Peselj, "Serbo-Croatian Agreement of 1939 and American Foreign Policy," Journal of Croatian Studies 11-12 (1970-71): 23.

to elect a new parliament also prevented the constitutionally mandated ratification of the Sporazum itself. Under the provisions of Article 116, the agreement and the gains it represented for Croatia remained temporary, and therefore insecure.⁶⁰

The internal consolidation of Banovina Croatia continued, however, despite the irreconcilable difficulties encountered in the overall reorganization of the state. The transfer of administrative competencies progressed smoothly, excepting the final adjustment of the Sporazum's financial provisions. Eventually, a compromise formula provided Croatia a proportional share of the state budget, plus the authority to collect and utilize some tax monies formerly due the state.⁶¹ These arrangements provided Croatia with the necessary financial autonomy promised by the Sporazum, but remained well shy of the traditional Croatian demand to have "its purse in its own pocket."

But the fall of France in June 1940 pushed Yugoslavia's unresolved domestic troubles into the background, as the danger of Axis aggression loomed ever larger. As the Axis turned its attentions eastward, Yugoslavia's leaders had to neglect the work of internal reconciliation.⁶² Ensuing developments, arising from the

⁶⁰Stevan K. Pavlowitch, Yugoslavia (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 99.

⁶¹Mr. Ronald I. Campbell to FO, Apr. 4, 1940, PRO, R4587/89/92; Macek, 200-201.

⁶²Clearly, much of the populace--both Serbs and Croats--agreed further state reorganization must wait, in view of the war situation. Seton-Watson had reported as early as December 1939 that Serbs wanted the election and reorganization issues solved before the spring of 1940, when they expected major operations to begin on the Western Front. (See Macek, 206; Dragnich, 129; Hugh

complex interplay between domestic and foreign events, overtaxed the Sporazum's fragile basis for Serb-Croat accord.

Mussolini had actually planned to attack Yugoslavia as early as September 1939; only Italy's glaring military deficiencies stayed his hand.⁶³ Germany's swift conquest of western Europe also allowed Hitler to turn his attention eastward after June 1940, however, triggering a chain of events disastrous to Yugoslavia. Hitler's rapid establishment of German hegemony over Hungary and Romania between June and October 1940 tightened the Axis noose around neutral Yugoslavia,⁶⁴ and triggered a fit of jealous pique by Mussolini. The Duce, hearing news of Germany's occupation of Romania, blustered to Ciano: "Hitler always faces me with a fait accompli. This time I am going to pay him back in his own coin. He will find out from the papers that I have occupied Greece."⁶⁵

Seton-Watson memo, in Ronald Syme to F. D. W. Brown (FO), Dec. 12, 1939, PRO, R11468/20/92.)

⁶³In August 1939, Hitler invited Mussolini to attack Yugoslavia in conjunction with the German attack on Poland. Italy's military inadequacy prevented the Duce's acceptance of Hitler's offer, which was in any case withdrawn by early September. In March 1940, the Fuehrer made it explicitly clear that he expected quiet in the Balkans. But in April, Ciano noted the Duce's "hands fairly itch" to grab Croatia. (See Galeazzo Ciano, The Ciano Diaries: 1939-1943 [New York: Doubleday & Co., 1946], 119-21, 126, 147-48, 234, 247 [hereafter cited as "Ciano Diaries"]; Documents on German Foreign Policy: 1918-1945, series D, vol. 8, doc. 23 [note 1]: Memo by State Secretary Weizsäcker; doc. 663: Hitler memo to Mussolini, Mar. 8, 1940; doc. 669: Record of Ribbentrop-Mussolini conversation, Mar. 11, 1940. [Hereafter cited as "DGFP."])

⁶⁴Barbara Jelavich, History of the Balkans, vol. 2, Twentieth Century (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1983), 224-27.

⁶⁵Ciano Diaries, 300.

Mussolini's reluctant legions attacked Greece on October 28, 1940. Within three weeks, however, the Italians were retreating into Albania and seeking German military assistance. To pave the way for his intervention on Mussolini's behalf, Hitler began pressuring Yugoslavia to join the Axis in November. As Hoptner aptly notes:

The Italo-Greek war became a nightmare for the Yugoslavs. Heretofore they had been important to Germany for political and economic reasons. Now they were beginning to be important militarily, for with every Greek victory the Germans grew more certain they would have to intervene to rescue the Italians. Germany's political relationship with Yugoslavia was beginning to have a military component.⁶⁶

Prince Paul had maintained a policy of neutrality since the outbreak of war in September 1939, but his sympathies were unreservedly pro-Allied. German pressure for Yugoslav adherence to the Tripartite Pact forced him gradually towards accommodation with the Axis, however. Paul's desperate attempts to establish regional security alliances achieved no conclusive result, and Anglo-American pressures to resist Axis impositions were backed by no assurances of concrete support.⁶⁷ Despite Yugoslavia's parlous political and military situation, and Britain's total inability to provide significant aid, Churchill even urged Paul to fall upon the Italian rear in Albania!⁶⁸ As Prince Paul responded to the hectoring

⁶⁶Hoptner, 190.

⁶⁷Ibid., ch. 8 passim.

⁶⁸FRUS, vol. 2 (1941), 966-67: Lane to State Dept., Mar. 23, 1941. Paul told Lane he had received a telegram from Churchill urging this action. (See also 951-52: Churchill to Roosevelt, undated [received Mar. 10]. Churchill thought "no country ever had such a military chance" as Yugoslavia.)

of U.S. Minister Lane: "You big nations are hard, you talk of our honor but you are far away."⁶⁹

Popular sentiment in Belgrade indeed called defiantly for resistance to Germany and its demands, but Croatia and Slovenia were strongly pacifist. Paul felt they would only fight if Germany attacked despite Yugoslavia's adherence to the Pact. Further, domestic political considerations required the army defend Croatia and Slovenia, though such a deployment was militarily unsound. The prince regent was fully prepared to fight if attacked, but the odds of *successful resistance* were clearly nil.⁷⁰ Minister of War General Pesic estimated the army could resist some six weeks, but only if it withdrew rapidly into the mountains of Bosnia.⁷¹

After months of evading concrete commitment to the Pact, Yugoslavia was forced to make a final decision in March 1941. Foreign Minister Cincar-Markovic, Yugoslavia's chief negotiator, proposed modifications to the treaty terms which the government expected the Germans to refuse. When the Germans surprisingly accepted his proposal, Yugoslavia could procrastinate no longer.⁷² To emphasize the point, Ribbentrop directed Heeren on March 22nd to

⁶⁹FRUS, vol. 2 (1941), 962-63: Lane to State Dept., undated (received Mar. 21, 1941).

⁷⁰Ibid., 945-46, 949-50, and 962-63: Lane to State Dept., Feb. 18, Mar. 7, and Mar. 21, 1941. All telegrams report Lane's conversations with Prince Paul.

⁷¹Hoptner, 220.

⁷²FRUS, vol. 2 (1941), 958-59: Lane to State Dept., Mar. 20, 1941. Campbell also told Lane that Cvetkovic had stated: "We are provoking Germany as much as possible, but without effect." (Ibid., 957: Lane to State Dept., Mar. 17, 1941.)

give the Yugoslavs three days to confirm the Tripartite Pact; otherwise, the deal was off.⁷³

In his moment of destiny, Prince Paul knew he ruled a divided country. On the night of March 20th, the full cabinet voted on the Pact. Of the seventeen ministers, fourteen supported adherence as the best means of forestalling a German attack. The Croat and Slovene leaders, as well as their followers, saw the treaty as the only way to prevent invasion--they voted for ratification.

The Serb Opposition parties and the Serbian Orthodox Church refused to support the Pact, though. In some cases, such as Milos Trifunovic of the Radical Party, the motive was irresponsible political opportunism.⁷⁴ In most instances, their opposition was based upon pro-Allied and anti-German feelings which had very strong emotional and historical roots among Serbs. On March 23rd, Air Force Commanding General Simovic, himself a Serb, even warned Prince Paul that adherence to the Pact could lead to a revolution. As

⁷³Ribbentrop to Heeren, Mar. 22, 1941, GWDP, 1369/D523319-20. As Johannes Wuescht has pointed out, the German "ultimatum" did not threaten retaliation should Yugoslavia fail to sign the Pact. Wuescht also documented the complete lack of German military preparations to attack Yugoslavia; in his view, "the Belgrade government lost its nerve." His documentation did not include the Ribbentrop telegram, however, but rather an excerpt (taken from Hoptner) from a rather milder Ribbentrop-Heeren telephone conversation. The telegram ominously warned that failure to sign meant Yugoslavia's government "renounced its capability to act in the realm of foreign policy" and thereby "proved itself incapable of maneuver" in a "moment of the utmost importance" for the country. Such phrases, in the context of the times, were ample reason for the Yugoslav government to believe its refusal invited a German attack. (See Johannes Wuescht, Jugoslawien und das Dritte Reich [Stuttgart: Seewald Verlag, 1969], 153-56. [All translations mine.])

⁷⁴Hoptner, 238; Macek, 209-14.

Simovic recorded the conversation in his memoirs:

I frankly conceded that I would have trouble restraining my fliers; and once the pact was signed, anything might happen. The pilots might take the planes and drop bombs first on me. . . .

"And then," I added, "Your Highness in the palace."⁷⁵

Despite the obvious danger from the Axis forces surrounding his country, Prince Paul told Lane he believed Yugoslav disunity was his greatest difficulty. Paul averred he might act differently if he could believe the country were behind him. Almost losing his self control under the strain, Paul told Lane: "I am out of my head; I wish I were dead." The prince then "ranted about Bulgarian perfidy, British stupidity and opposition of Croats. . . ."⁷⁶ The evening before this meeting, Paul had presented Lane his photograph, an action customarily signifying the termination of a diplomat's mission. For despite his fervently pro-Allied feelings, Paul had to act in accordance with the realities of German power, British impotence, and Yugoslavia's hopeless military position. Paul directed his government to sign the Pact.⁷⁷

As Ribbentrop recorded a March 4th meeting between Prince Paul and the Fuehrer: "The Prince Regent expressed his apprehensions regarding internal policy by stating that he feared

⁷⁵Dusan Simovic, "Memoirs," unpublished, written in London, 1942, quoted in Dragisa Ristic, Yugoslavia's Revolution of 1941 (University Park: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1966), 75-78.

⁷⁶ERUS, vol. 2 (1941), 967: Lane to State Dept., Mar. 24, 1941.

⁷⁷Ibid., 966-67: Lane to State Dept., Mar. 23, 1941. It is doubtful Paul would have acted differently had he been assured of Croat support, for Yugoslavia's military position was hopeless in any case. The regent supported the Allies at least as strongly as any other Serb, but he alone bore the responsibility for the country's survival. (See Hoptner, 238.)

that he would no longer be here in 6 months if he followed our advice [to sign the Pact]."⁷⁸ If Paul erred in his assessment, it was only on the side of optimism. Despite the extremely lenient provisions of the treaty of March 25th, by which Yugoslavia incurred no military obligations to Germany,⁷⁹ a coup overthrew the government within 36 hours. A group of Air Force officers organized and led the revolt, placing young King Peter on the throne and installing General Simovic as Prime Minister.

The senior officers who conducted the coup d'etat of March 27th were all Serbs; their actions arose from conceptions of state, military, and--above all--national honor which were peculiarly Serbian. Viewing themselves as guardians of the national honor and protectors of the people, they were passionately anti-German and pro-Allied in outlook. Yugoslavia's neutrality was sufficiently disturbing to them, but the idea of an alliance with Germany seemed intolerably shameful. They also resented Prince Paul's concessions to the Croats, which they believed weakened the centralist state

⁷⁸DGFP, D, vol. 12, doc. 130: Ribbentrop telegram to Heeren, summarizing Hitler-Paul conference of Mar. 4th, Mar. 8, 1941. As Ribbentrop described his reply to Paul: "I feared the reverse might happen, that is, that he would no longer be here in six months if he did not take our advice [to sign]. . . ."

⁷⁹By the terms of Yugoslavia's adherence to the Pact, her sovereignty and territorial integrity were guaranteed, and the Axis promised not to demand military transit rights. These terms were public. Secretly, the Axis also renounced all right to request military assistance from Yugoslavia. In sum, Yugoslavia incurred no military obligation to the Axis. Paul ensured that all Serb Opposition leaders knew these facts prior to signature of the Pact; he personally discussed them with General Simovic. Essentially, Hitler saw the Pact as insurance against possible Yugoslav interdiction of German transit to Greece. Considerations of terrain required his armies to advance along the Struma River valley in Bulgaria, only a few miles from Yugoslavia. (See Hoptner, 203, 237; and 304-6 [texts].)

they held dear.⁸⁰ As King Peter later wrote, the Pact was simply a disgrace:

For every true Serb there could be only one outcome; the revolution that followed on March 27. The Serbs were willing, as the Poles had been, to count only on themselves for the terrible days to come.⁸¹

In a March 27th speech to trade union leaders in London, Winston Churchill jubilantly announced "the Yugoslav nation found its soul."⁸² The masses in Belgrade and many other cities shared his reaction, pouring into the streets to shout: "Bolje rat nego pakt (Better war than pact)," "Nema rata bez Srba (No war without Serbs)," "Bolje grob nego rob (Better a grave than a slave)" and other similarly bellicose slogans.⁸³ Belgrade's patriotic fervor, so reminiscent of the 1908 demonstrations against Austria's Bosnian gambit, was reflected in many cities and towns in Serbia and other regions.⁸⁴ The reaction of the peasantry is insufficiently

⁸⁰Hoptner, 247-59, gives a fascinating account of the conspirators and the peculiarly Serbian emotional-historical nature of their motivations.

⁸¹Peter II, King of Yugoslavia, A King's Heritage: The Memoirs of King Peter II of Yugoslavia (London: Cassell & Co., 1955), 64. Peter had no advance knowledge of the coup. He was, however, hatching his own scheme: a plot to lead the army in Macedonia to Greece, there to fight with the Allies! (Ibid., 60-61.)

⁸²The Unrelenting Struggle: War Speeches by the Right Hon. Winston Churchill, comp. Charles Eade (London: Cassell & Co., 1942), 87.

⁸³Hoptner, 258-59; FRUS, vol. 2 (1941), 968-69; Lane to State Dept., Mar. 27, 1941.

⁸⁴Tomasevich, Chetniks, 47; Milija M. Lasic-Vasojevic, Enemies on All Sides: The Fall of Yugoslavia (Washington: North American International, 1976), 4-5. Lasic provides an eyewitness account of the unanimous popular joy in the Montenegrin provincial town of Krusevac.

documented, however; Tomasevich speculates they were primarily concerned about the heightened probability of war.⁸⁵

It is clear their Croatian counterparts did not share Belgrade's enthusiasm at all. Croats saw the overthrow of the regent as a strike against the Sporazum, and thus against Croatia. As Lane reported on March 30th:

The crux of present situation is Serb-Croatian relations. . . . As Prince Paul and Cvetkovic were collaborators with Macek in achieving sporazum [sic] in August 1939, their elimination and introduction into government of Serb nationalist elements is symbolic of recrudescence of spirit of greater Serbia. . . .

Spirit . . . among Serbian people is so high that Government may be compelled to accept rupture with Croatia rather than continue policy of cooperation with Germany as a united nation.⁸⁶

Macek's memoirs confirm this impression: "Like most of the Croats, we had no doubt that the insurrection . . . had been aimed at Prince Paul who, according to Serbian opinion, had 'yielded too much to the Croats.'"⁸⁷ In stark contrast to the crowds of joyous revellers who welcomed Peter's coronation in flag-bedecked Belgrade, German

⁸⁵ Tomasevich, Chetniks, 47. Milan Nedic entertains no such reservations about Serb reactions to the coup; he believes they were universally "euphoric." He explains this reaction partially in terms of the Serbian characteristic of "inat," or "contrariness," which underlay their dogged resolution to resist the Germans and help the Allies, cost what it may. Nedic's great uncles Milan and Milutin Nedic each served as Chief of the Yugoslav General Staff in the immediate prewar years. General Milan Nedic later headed the regime which administered rump Serbia under German occupation. (Mr. Milan G. Nedic, interview by author, Mar. 1, 1992, Houston, Texas.) Nedic's explanation reflects part of the complex of emotional and historical factors portrayed by Hoptner. (See note 80.)

⁸⁶ Lane to State Dept., Mar. 30, 1941, 860h.00/1264, M1203-16.

⁸⁷ Macek, 220.

Consul Freundt observed no flags flying on Croat houses in Zagreb.⁸⁸

Evidence of the Serbian nationalist inclinations of the coup leaders lends some credence to the Croatian interpretation of the revolt as anti-Croat in nature.⁸⁹ Simovic's actions upon assuming power, on the other hand, were inconsistent with such motivations. Faced with domestic and foreign political realities, Simovic made the same choices Paul had. He immediately pressed Macek to join his government, even expressing his willingness to expand Croatian autonomy. On the strength of this promise, Macek agreed to allow the Croat ministers in Belgrade to assume posts in the new cabinet.⁹⁰

Macek reserved his own participation in the government for some days; he finally went to Belgrade on April 4th. As a precondition to joining the cabinet, Macek specified the government must recognize the Sporazum. Apparently he also demanded the reaffirmation of Yugoslavia's adherence to the Tripartite Pact; in any case, Foreign Minister Nincic formally notified Heeren on March 30th of the new regime's acceptance of the treaty.⁹¹

The basic policies of the new government thus duplicated those of the old. Despite underlying fundamental differences in

⁸⁸Peter II, 72; Freundt to A. A., Mar. 29, 1941, GWDP, 1687/E023740.

⁸⁹Macek, 218; Stephen Gazi, A History of Croatia (New York: Philosophical Library, 1973), 330.

⁹⁰Macek, 218.

⁹¹Peter II, 73; Tomasevich, Chetniks, 47-48; DGFP, D, vol. 12, doc. 235: Heeren telegram to A. A., Mar. 30, 1941.

outlook, the *Simovic regime* reaffirmed its predecessor's approaches to the Croat question and the Pact as the only practicable courses of action. As Mark Wheeler has written:

Serb self-esteem had undoubtedly been rescued by the coup and the anti-German demonstrations that accompanied it, but it is difficult to see what else it achieved. Its consequences, on the other hand, were to be far-reaching.⁹²

The actions of the revolutionaries won them rapturous admiration in the eyes of the West, but provoked profound dismay and mistrust among the Croats. Most fatefully of all, the revolution of March 27, 1941 caused a livid Adolf Hitler to order immediate preparations "to smash Yugoslavia militarily and as a state." (Italics mine.)⁹³ The coup thus precipitated the very Axis attack whose specter gave such impetus to the process of Serb-Croat accord in 1939. At the same time, the Serbian national character of the putsch played a role in undermining the fragile basis of Croat support which the Sporazum sought to ensure.

The iron test of war found Yugoslavia woefully divided and unprepared to offer meaningful resistance. Certainly, the Royal Yugoslav Army was grossly overmatched by the forces arrayed against it, but the rapidity and totality of its collapse was nonetheless striking. From a military perspective, the debacle was the end result of Yugoslavia's complete inferiority to her opponents in every measurable category: strategy, tactical doctrine, equipment, training, and numbers.⁹⁴ But Yugoslavia's military

⁹²Mark C. Wheeler, Britain and the War for Yugoslavia, 1940-1943 (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1980), 54.

⁹³DGFP, D, vol. 12, doc. 217: Minutes of Fuehrer Conference, Mar. 27, 1941.

⁹⁴Tomasevich, Chetniks, 54-75, provides an outstanding synopsis of these

prostration reflected fatal political and moral weaknesses, too, and it is primarily in the latter that one must seek the clues relevant to an interpretation of the Sporazum. For the events of April 1941 prove the agreement failed to accomplish its immediate purpose of guaranteeing Croat cooperation in the defense of the state.

Fears of Croat unreliability still prevailed at the highest echelons of the Yugoslav Army itself, doubtless exacerbated by memories of the rampant mobilization difficulties in Croatia in 1939. As Lane reported a conversation with the Chief of the General Staff, General Petar Koscic, "the Croats cannot be counted on for effective resistance due to dissident elements. . . ." ⁹⁵

Hitler agreed with this assessment and explicitly planned to capitalize on it. His Directive No. 25 stated: "The domestic political tension in Yugoslavia will be sharpened by political assurances to the Croats." At a military operations conference on March 27th, Hitler's calculations were recorded: "It is to be expected that the Croats will take our side when we attack. They will be assured of political treatment (autonomy later on) in accordance with this." ⁹⁶

German attempts to enlist Macek's support in subverting Yugoslav unity met with failure, however. Ribbentrop directed Freundt, in Zagreb, to confidentially inform the Croats that Germany foresaw an independent Croatia, should Yugoslavia "collapse as a

factors. A detailed military analysis is provided by U. S. Dept. of the Army, The German Campaigns in the Balkans (Spring 1941) (Washington: Dept. of the Army, 1953).

⁹⁵Lane to State Dept., Oct. 22, 1940, 860h.00/1208, M1203-16.

⁹⁶DGFP, D, vol. 12, doc. 223: Fuehrer Directive No. 25, Mar. 27, 1941; doc. 217: Minutes of Fuehrer Conference on Yugoslavia, Mar. 27, 1941.

result of its errors.”⁹⁷ After some initial cautious maneuvering, Macek “categorically rejected any discussion of an independent Croatia” on April 3rd. In spite of German suggestions that he refuse a position in the Simovic government, Macek publicly announced his entry into the cabinet the same evening.⁹⁸ As Freundt accurately reported, Macek apparently sought “the maintenance of peace with Germany and the continued existence of Yugoslavia.”⁹⁹ In the ensuing death agony of the kingdom, Macek remained loyal to his nation, his state and his attempt to reconcile the two: the Sporazum.

The Germans first approached Macek because he had been the dominant figure in Croatian politics for over a decade; clearly, they believed he retained this position.¹⁰⁰ Things had changed, though, for Macek was no longer able to guarantee Croatian obedience to his commands. The decline of his authority began when he concluded the Sporazum and entered the hated Belgrade government. After the long years of bitter opposition and threats of secession or civil war, Macek’s transformation into loyal Yugoslav was unpalatable to many

⁹⁷Klaus Olshausen, Zwischenspiel auf dem Balkan: Die deutsche Politik gegenüber Jugoslawien und Griechenland von März bis Juli 1941 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1973), 92-94. (All translations mine.)

⁹⁸Ladislaus Hory and Martin Broszat, Der kroatische Ustascha-Staat: 1941-1945 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1964), 43-48. A Macek lieutenant told Freundt that Macek had directed Croatian soldiers to “act accordingly,” should the Simovic government arrest him and suspend Croatian autonomy. These suspicions were overcome, however, by Simovic’s assurances. As in the Carnelutti incidents of 1939, however, Macek’s personal involvement in these intrigues cannot be conclusively demonstrated. (All translations mine.)

⁹⁹ Freundt to A. A., Apr. 2, 1941, GWDP, 1369/D523307.

¹⁰⁰Olshausen, 94; Wuescht, 187-88.

Croats. The Sporazum itself fell far short of Macek's oft-espoused demands, and the stalemated implementation process caused still more bitterness. The military coup and Macek's subsequent entry into the Simovic government were the last straws for many Croats, who "expected more than this from their leader." Macek had "developed more and more from a Croat patriot into a Yugoslav statesman."¹⁰¹ Croats were probably fully prepared to follow Macek in resistance to Belgrade, as they had for so many years. In the final analysis, however, their Croat nationalism outweighed their loyalty to the Peasant Party leader.

When Macek refused to support German efforts to subvert Yugoslavia, they turned to the shadowy radical elements which had gained strength ever since Macek "sold out" to Belgrade in 1939. The radical star was clearly in the ascendant. On the first of April, the German Abwehr (military intelligence and espionage) post in Belgrade reported the Croatian Peasant Guard had ordered its members to ignore their military call-up notices.¹⁰² German agents in Zagreb also gained substantial support from radicals within the Peasant Party for a declaration of independence and request for German protection, but the outbreak of war preceded the fruition of these conspiratorial efforts.¹⁰³ By April 5th, the chief German

¹⁰¹Charles Kamber, review of In the Struggle for Freedom, by Vladko Macek, in Journal of Croatian Studies 2 (1961): 169-71.

¹⁰²Hory, 47. This order was issued in Macek's name, but without his authority. The Peasant Guard was a paramilitary arm of the Peasant Party.

¹⁰³Olshausen, 94-95. As the author rightly notes, Hitler was not depending on a Croatian request for assistance to justify his attack on Yugoslavia. His primary goal was to capitalize on Croatian unwillingness to fight Germany on behalf of Yugoslavia.

operative in Zagreb reported Macek's influence in the city was nil.¹⁰⁴

As the German storm broke over Yugoslavia, Macek made a public appeal to his beloved Croats. In a brief radio address on April 8th, he called for them "to observe strict discipline and to perform their duties conscientiously in the Army and elsewhere." Macek sent a similar appeal to two Croatian regiments which had disarmed their Serbian superior officers and refused to go to the front, though he never learned if his action had any effect.¹⁰⁵ The day before Macek's radio address, a diarist of the German High Command had laconically noted: "Matschek Einfluß verloren (Macek influence lost)."¹⁰⁶ Though impossible to quantify accurately, this assessment was, for practical purposes, true.

Several entries from the personal war journals of General Franz Halder, Chief of the German Army General Staff, broadly indicated the extent of Croatian indiscipline. On April 9th, Halder noted: "Only the Serbians want to continue fighting. Macedonians and Croats throw their weapons away." The next day, he reported: "In Northern Yugoslavia Croats seem to have refused to obey orders in some instances." Halder recorded that German troops entering Zagreb were "received by a cheering population." By April 11th, whole units in the primarily Croatian northern sector were

¹⁰⁴Olshausen, 94.

¹⁰⁵Macek, 227-28.

¹⁰⁶Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, ed., Kriegstagebuch des Oberkommandos der Wehrmacht (Wehrmachtführungsstab), vol. 1 1940-1941 (Frankfurt: Bernard & Graefe Verlag für Wehrwesen, 1965), 376. (All translations mine.)

surrendering to aircraft flying overhead. Two days later, Halder observed the "Croats have stopped fighting altogether."¹⁰⁷

Colonel (later Major General) F. W. von Mellenthin, serving as the intelligence officer of the Second Army, confirmed the lack of enthusiasm shown by the predominantly Croatian units facing him. According to his information, only about one-third of the Croats obeyed the mobilization order. Those present for duty offered negligible resistance, and some units even mutinied and greeted the advancing Germans as "liberators." Like Halder, Mellenthin reported the enthusiastic reception offered by the population of Zagreb. All in all, Mellenthin thought "the conquest of Yugoslavia was virtually a military parade. . . ."¹⁰⁸

A German Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service) report in early April estimated only twenty to thirty percent of the Croatian peasantry obeyed the call-up, a figure slightly lower than Mellenthin's.¹⁰⁹ Wuescht, drawing from the postwar Yugoslav military historian Velimir Terzic, has cited an army-wide reporting

¹⁰⁷The Halder Diaries: The Private War Journals of Colonel General Franz Halder (Boulder: Westview Press, 1976), 60-66. Though Halder reported the "disintegration" of various parts of the Yugoslav Army, no entries other than those cited here indicate indiscipline or total lack of fighting spirit as the cause. (See also German Campaigns in the Balkans, 58, 68-69.)

¹⁰⁸F. W. von Mellenthin, Panzer Battles: A Study of the Employment of Armor in the Second World War, ed. L. C. F. Turner, trans. H. Betzler (Norman: Univ. of Oklahoma Press, 1956), 29-31. It is quite possible that Mellenthin, as Intelligence Officer of the field army which occupied Zagreb, submitted the report to Army High Command (Oberkommando des Heeres-OKH) which prompted Halder's diary entry regarding the enthusiastic reception given German troops. The "parade" nature of the campaign is confirmed by the U.S. Army official history: German casualties totaled only 558 men. (See German Campaigns in the Balkans, 64.)

¹⁰⁹Olshausen, 95.

rate of seventy to ninety percent, compared to a Croatian rate of only fifty percent. The mobilization of transportation assets in Croatia also lagged behind other parts of Yugoslavia; overall, the army received fifty percent of the requisitioned wagons and teams, compared to a Croatian response of only ten to fifteen percent.¹¹⁰

Though the estimates of mobilization response vary somewhat, they are consistent enough to document a widespread Croatian unwillingness to fight for Yugoslavia in April 1941. Various reliable reports of treacherous acts add to the picture of Croatian unreliability in the war against the Germans.¹¹¹ National and political biases permeate the historiography of Yugoslavia's collapse, however, making it impossible to ascertain accurately the extent and impact of Croat rebellion and disloyalty. Depending on the source, either Serb hegemonism, Croat betrayal, Communist treachery, or capitalist contradictions were the true cause of the collapse.¹¹²

The most visible and notorious actor in the Yugoslav tragedy was "Croatia's Quisling," Ante Pavelic.¹¹³ Condemned to death (in absentia) for terrorist and anti-state activities in 1929,¹¹⁴ Pavelic

¹¹⁰Wuescht, 176.

¹¹¹German Campaigns in the Balkans, 68-69; Tomasevich, Chetniks, 79.

¹¹²Tomasevich, Chetniks, 75-84, illustrates the main polemical trends in the historiography of April 1941. Petrovich observes that the Croatian role in April 1941 was the most sensitive topic of Yugoslav historiography in the early 1960s. (See Michael B. Petrovich, "Continuing Nationalism in Yugoslav Historiography," Nationalities Papers 6, no. 2 (1978): 163.

¹¹³Joseph S. Roucek, ed. Slavonic Encyclopedia (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), s.v. "Pavelic, Ante," by Arthur B. Trelstad.

¹¹⁴Ante Pavelic, Aus dem Kampfe um den selbständigen Staat Kroatien, ed.

had found safe haven in Italy since 1934.¹¹⁵ With Mussolini's express support, Pavelic and several hundred of his Croatian Ustasa (fascist) terrorists used Italy as a base for their activities throughout the 1930s. As Yugoslav resistance crumbled in 1941, Mussolini sent Pavelic and his Ustasa to Zagreb. German agents working in Zagreb arranged for a Pavelic deputy, Colonel Slavko Kvaternik, to proclaim the existence of the "Independent State of Croatia" on April 10th; Pavelic arrived five days later to assume control.¹¹⁶

Macek himself admitted the enthusiasm with which Zagreb greeted the proclamation of Croatian independence:

A wave of enthusiasm pervaded Zagreb at this time. . . . Many people thought it a great advantage to be freed from Serbian domination. The fact that the Germans had gift-wrapped their occupation under the euphemistic title of "Independent State of Croatia" blinded and intoxicated many. . . . Such opinions were prevalent in Zagreb and most other cities.

In the villages the situation was quite different. As in 1918 the peasantry had accepted the new order with profound depression. . . .¹¹⁷

Within two short months, the initial joy of Croat nationalists in Zagreb was undermined when Mussolini exacted repayment for his long patronage of the Ustasa movement. Pavelic granted the Duce

Ivan Kodanic (Vienna: Kroatische Korrespondenz "Gric," 1931), 94. (All translations mine.)

¹¹⁵Wuescht, 187.

¹¹⁶Hory, 49-57; Wuescht, 187-90; Olshausen, 162-68. These sources prove Germany did not specifically seek out Pavelic as a partner. After Macek rejected his offers, German operative Edmund Veessenmayer sought any figurehead who would proclaim Croatian independence prior to the Wehrmacht's arrival in Zagreb. Kvaternik, Pavelic's lieutenant, stepped into the breach.

¹¹⁷Macek, 230-31.

territorial concessions in Dalmatia and along the coast which enraged all Croats, but especially the passionate nationalists who had initially welcomed their new "independence." Macek and the German commanding general in Zagreb both recognized Italy's territorial aggrandizement as a devastating blow to the new regime's prestige.¹¹⁸

German intelligence assessments also agreed with Macek that the Ustasa movement gained little support among the peasantry, which comprised about eighty percent of the population. Ustasa recruiting efforts among Peasant Party adherents apparently succeeded only among its urban right-wing elements. The arrest and internment of Macek and numerous other C. P. P. leaders won the Ustasa few friends in rural Croatia; their bloody massacres of thousands of Serbs repelled still more. By August 1941, German sources reported much of the Croatian populace, even including old supporters of the Ustasa, now rejected the Pavelic regime.¹¹⁹

Without a doubt, the reign of anti-Serbian terror which Pavelic instituted was one of the most shocking developments of the Second World War. The genocidal policies of Pavelic's terrorist Ustasa state cast a shadow of nationalist bitterness over Yugoslavia which lingers to the present day. To many observers,¹²⁰ the

¹¹⁸Hory, 68; Macek, 232-33.

¹¹⁹Hory, 82-85.

¹²⁰Ruth Mitchell, The Serbs Choose War (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Company, 1943), 77-78, 121-23, 247-65; Stjepan Hefer, Croatian Struggle for Freedom and Statehood, trans. Andrija Ilic (Argentina: Croatian Information Service, [1955]), 129-31. Both books are crude propaganda pieces that agree on only one thing: the Ustasa state was an expression of the Croatian popular will. Mitchell called it vile treachery, while Hefer believed it glorious

establishment of the Independent State of Croatia has appeared as tangible proof of a massive plot by Croat nationalists against the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in general and Serbs in particular. By derivation, an organization capable of such mass terror was believed to have broad support from the population in whose name it cloaked its actions. Within this logical framework, acts of Croatian indiscipline in the April war against the Axis assumed a secondary, or preparatory, significance. In this view, it was the terroristic Independent State of Croatia which represented the ultimate, and overwhelming, rejection of the Sporazum.

Such a conclusion is tantalizing in its clarity; however, it is somewhat misleading. For the establishment of the Independent State of Croatia did not represent a broadly-based popular uprising. Even in the throes of Yugoslavia's collapse, German agents were necessary to stage the proclamation of the new state;¹²¹ five days then passed before Pavelic arrived with a band of followers to assume control. Independent Croatia was clearly the result of a coup, conducted by a small extremist group supported by German bayonets. Reliable evidence indicates the Ustasa were a minority organization with relatively limited support, who stayed in control by the ruthless application of unlimited power.¹²²

patriotism. Such books typify the opposing ultranationalist viewpoints which have distorted the events of April 1941 almost beyond clarification.

¹²¹Hory, 51.

¹²²Tomasevich estimates Ustasa numbers in April 1941 at between 900 and several thousand. He also cites a Croatian troop strength report in 1943, which showed only 11% of the total comprised Ustasa units. The remainder were in regular army units. (See Tomasevich, Chetniks, 105-7.)

The emotional, historical, and political legacy of the Ustasa state was, and remains, devastating. Despite this fact, its limited popular support makes it a less than satisfactory proof that Croats generally rejected the Sporazum and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. The most convincing proof of widespread rejection is better sought elsewhere. One need look no farther than the empty Croatian regimental depots and transportation parks of March and April 1941. By their overwhelming absence, the Croatian peasant masses demonstrated their complete unwillingness to defend the agreement Macek made on their behalf--or at least to defend what it had become by the spring of 1941.

There is no reason to believe Croatia's urban population responded more favorably to mobilization than did the peasants; quite the contrary is the case. The citizens of Zagreb who glumly refused to celebrate the accord in August 1939 welcomed the Germans as "liberators" in 1941. In the intervening months, American, British, and German diplomatic observers had all noted the rise of radical influence there. The primarily urban Frankists hated the Sporazum from its inception; they despised the Belgrade government with which it was negotiated and scorned the "traitor" Macek who betrayed the cause of Croatian independence. Their actions in April 1941 and thereafter were consistent with their rejection of any accord with the Serbian "enemy."

By April 1941, no major element of the Croatian population was willing to defend the state of Yugoslavia. The Sporazum must therefore be judged to have failed in its immediate goal. Whether it had ever provided Croats with a vision they were willing to defend

is impossible to ascertain. Without any doubt, the mobilization disasters of 1939 were an immediate and severe blow to the Sporazum's credibility in Croatia. Still more grievous was the failure to resolve the impasse over elections and establishment of a Serbian banovina and permanent Croatian boundaries.

This stalemate arose from fundamentally incompatible elements of the Serbian and Croatian national programs; the Sporazum offered a provisional resolution of these issues, but no consensus existed for a permanent solution. Banovina Croatia thus remained a temporary entity, unsanctioned by parliament, with provisional borders. This deadlock inflicted mortal structural and psychological damage to the reconciliation process, and also represented the failure of the Sporazum as a mechanism for reorganizing the state.

The final blow to the Sporazum was the coup d'etat of March 27, 1941. Organized by Serbian officers whose nationalist motivations were anathema to Croats, it threatened to provoke war with Germany--a war the Croats demanded Yugoslavia avoid. Even in the eyes of moderate Croats, the coup also represented a reactionary attempt to reject the Sporazum and nullify the progress made since August 1939.

In the fateful days of April 1941, Croats showed they were unwilling to defend the state order of which the Sporazum was part. It was left to the government-in-exile to debate the potential applicability of the Sporazum in the postwar era. However, this government's acrimonious deliberations on the future of the Serb-

Croat accord were destined to have only archival significance. For as the old guard politicians argued the politics of nationalism in London, a totally new vision of the Yugoslav state took shape in the remote fastnesses of their native land. This vision belonged to Josip Broz Tito.

CONCLUSIONS

The Sporazum of August 1939 sought to unify Yugoslavia against the threat of foreign aggression by establishing a basis for resolution of the Croatian question. In many ways, it was a praiseworthy effort to resolve the Serb-Croat impasse that had prevented Yugoslavia's political consolidation since its inception. In the final analysis, however, the Sporazum failed to achieve its immediate goal of Yugoslav unity because it proved an inadequate mechanism for the fundamental reorganization of the centralized, unitary state. Indeed, no adequate mechanism was feasible, given the nature of the problem.

But the demand for a major transformation of the state was the very heart of the Croatian question, and anything less was bound to prove unacceptable to Croats. Serbs, however, generally looked askance at Croatian demands for a federal (or confederal) state form. The difference between the Serbian and Croatian conceptions was much more than legalistic formality, chauvinistic prejudice, or purely emotional attachment to respective national traditions. Had this been the case, a solution would doubtless have been found long before 1939. The fact that the shrill discourse of the times often assumed such levels of superficiality sadly serves to obscure the true nature of the problem. Perhaps especially vulnerable to such misconceptions are those fortunate enough to live in times and

places where the concepts of "nation" and "state" seem of remote significance at best, and benignly harmonious in any case.

At the root of the Serb-Croat impasse over state organization were their separate national identities, and their respective efforts to ensure these survived. Croatian nationalism arose within the Habsburg milieu in response to an aggressive Magyar nationalism which threatened to extinguish any separate Croatian identity. Ljudevit Gaj and the Illyrianists started the process of Croatian national "awakening," undertaking cultural efforts in an effort to preserve Croatian identity by associating it with a larger South Slav community. Later "Yugoslav" efforts, from Strossmayer to the Croat-Serb Coalition and the Yugoslav Committee, maintained strong links with this tradition. With few exceptions, Croat emphasis on Yugoslav ideologies reflected a determination to save Croatian individuality, rather than lose it in the concept of narodno jedinstvo.

Traditionally, Croats justified their claims to a distinct national identity on the basis of historic state right, which they traced back to 1102. Symbolized by the Ban and Sabor, state right was a mechanism of national differentiation which assumed particular importance in Croatian relationships with Serbia. The concept of the linguistically-defined nation, traditionally of central importance to Serbs and Croats alike, was inadequate to effectively distinguish between them. It was clear to Croat nationalists from Strossmayer forward that unification with the more numerous Serbs

posed the threat of Croatia's absorption, especially given the prior existence of an independent Serbian state.

These considerations made the centralist, unitary nature of the Vidovdan constitution anathema to Croats. As it made no provision for the establishment of any separate Croatian political entity, the future existence of the Croat nation itself seemed in jeopardy. The constitution's unitary definition of nationality only heightened these fears. In sum, the recognition of a Croatian political entity was more than a matter of national hubris, though that certainly played a role, too. Political recognition was at once the symbol of their separate nationhood, and the sole guarantee of their political interests.

Serbs, for the most part, were latecomers to the Yugoslav ideas so influential among their Croat counterparts. The Serbian national idea, enshrined in state policy since the middle of the nineteenth century, focused on one goal: the unification of Serbdom. Their state was born of the struggle against Ottoman overlords, and its precarious existence in the turbulent Balkan peninsula required unity and cohesion. This concept was emblazoned upon the Serbian coat of arms: Samo Sloga Srbina Spasava (Only Solidarity Saves the Serb).¹ To Serbs, federalism was not only a foreign concept, but one which seemed dangerous to the state that expressed and protected their national existence.

¹Jacob B. Hoptner, Yugoslavia in Crisis: 1934-1941 (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1962), 3.

Serbs had shed rivers of blood in pursuit of their goal of national unification, but their leaders had not adequately considered the challenges inherent in the "liberation" of their South Slav brethren in 1918. The immediate Croat agitation for a separate state flew in the face of Serbia's war goals, and also threatened the security of the state. Though most Serbian statesmen doubtless already planned to superimpose their existing state structure onto the new common state, Radic's vituperation served to convince them that any concessions towards the Croats would only encourage separatism. The Vidovdan constitution's centralist and unitary character thus reflected more than simple tradition for the Serbs; it represented security against foreign and domestic threats to state and national unity.

Croatian resistance to the constitution and the central government was defensive in origin, but the threat thus posed to the state engendered a similarly bitter defensive reaction from Serbs. The vicious cycle of boycott, obstructionism, government repression, and eventual dictatorship was tightly interwoven into a complex pattern of cause and effect that permeated all areas of Yugoslav life from the state's inception. By 1934, it was clear to King Alexander that a new way must be found, but his assassination placed the burden of change on Prince Regent Paul.

Essentially liberal by background and disposition, Paul sought to resolve the Croatian question on grounds of principle as well as practicality. He was determined to proceed on the basis of the existing 1931 constitution, however, for he believed his prerogatives as regent were limited. Macek refused to negotiate on

this basis, since this would comprise de facto recognition of the very system Croats sought to overturn.

International developments in 1938 and early 1939 finally broke this impasse. German annexation of Austria, the Sudetenland, and rump Czechoslovakia posed an unmistakable threat of aggression from the north; Italian expansionist designs on Yugoslavia's Adriatic coastal regions had long been a source of danger. Mussolini's conquest of Albania in April 1939 greatly heightened the tension. Indeed, Mussolini and Ciano actively pursued plans to use Croatian dissatisfaction as a means to subvert Yugoslavia. The Axis threat was very real, though it did not actually materialize until 1941.

Unfortunately, the obvious connection between the pace of Sporazum negotiations and the international threat exacerbated the mutual distrust which necessitated the reconciliation in the first place. Croats had little confidence in concessions obtained under duress, and Serbs bitterly resented Macek's threats of foreign intervention and Croat secession. Failure by the negotiating parties to secure the participation of the Serb Opposition further undermined support among Serbs for the resulting accord, as it reduced the Sporazum to an agreement between Prime Minister Cvetkovic's government party and Macek's Croatian Peasant Party. Another flaw in the negotiation process was the use of Article 116 of the 1931 constitution as the Sporazum's legal basis. On principle, Croats opposed any recognition of this constitution. Of further concern was the temporary nature of decrees issued under Article 116; the possibility existed that the government might

renege on its commitments. Though the talks represented a positive step in Serb-Croat relations, the shortcomings of the negotiation process provided additional obstacles to the success of the resulting agreement.

Perhaps the ultimate flaw in the negotiations process was the provisional formulation of some of the Sporazum's key elements. In order to achieve any agreement at all, final resolution of Banovina Croatia's boundaries and extension of the Sporazum's provisions to the rest of Yugoslavia were deferred to the accord's implementation phase. Free parliamentary elections were also promised to follow the promulgation of the agreement, though no date was specified.

These aspects of the Sporazum gave it a stature which is often ignored or simply dismissed. True, its framers specifically addressed only the establishment of Banovina Croatia, but they also sought to lay the groundwork for the fundamental reorganization of the Yugoslav state on a parliamentary basis. Prince Paul, Cvetkovic, and Macek should receive due credit for their efforts, as well as for the concrete steps they took to accommodate Croatian demands.

The agreement's provisional nature, however, was also a key to understanding its failure. Croats called for the promised parliamentary elections to be held as soon as possible, so the new Skupstina could ratify the Sporazum and proceed with the reorganization of the state. Serbs, on the other hand, demanded a Serbian banovina be created before elections were held; its boundaries were to include all of Yugoslavia except Banovina Croatia and Slovenia. This approach would preempt attempts by possible

parliamentary coalitions of Croats, Slovenes, and Bosnian Moslems to politically divide, and thereby marginalize, the Serbs.

Clearly, the proposed Serbian banovina closely resembled traditional Great Serbian territorial aspirations, and had the potential to exert decisive influence in state affairs. Croats would not accept Serbian claims to historically or ethnically Croatian territories in Bosnia and the Vojvodina, nor would they countenance the creation of a Serbian banovina powerful enough to dominate the joint state. The resulting stalemate prevented the holding of elections and the extension of the Sporazum's provisions beyond Banovina Croatia. The agreement thus remained unsanctioned by parliament, while Croatia's gains remained legally temporary and, therefore, insecure.

The Sporazum proved an inadequate mechanism for fundamental political change in Yugoslavia. As a result, both Prince Paul and Macek lost a great deal of popular support in moderate circles. Nationalist radicals of both sides had decried the accord from its very inception as a betrayal of respective national interests. The crises of March and April 1941 showed the profound nature of this dissatisfaction. Paul was overthrown by Serbian officers opposed to the government's adherence to the Tripartite Pact. These men also generally held strong Serbian nationalist views, however, and resented Paul's accommodation of the Croats. For their part, the Croats believed the coup was primarily directed against the Sporazum itself. General Simovic successfully appeased Macek in this regard, but the coup was the final blow to the Serb-Croat accord.

When Macek called for Croats to rally to the state's defense they were no longer prepared to obey him. The few who reported for service showed little or no willingness to defend the state against the German onslaught. Acts of sabotage and mutiny proved that some even welcomed the chance to overthrow it. The massive indifference Croats displayed to Yugoslavia's fate in April 1941 is the most convincing proof that the Sporazum failed to achieve its primary goal: a unified front against foreign aggression.

The coup and ensuing invasion were the final links in a complex chain connecting the Axis threat with the Sporazum's development. The threat of Italian or German attack provided the initial impetus for the accord and also influenced the pace and content of the Cvetkovic-Macek negotiations. After the agreement was promulgated, the danger of invasion necessitated the disastrous mobilization of 1939, and thus reflected and intensified existing Serb-Croat frictions. Foreign political developments after the fall of France eventually forced Yugoslavia's leaders to neglect their pursuit of domestic reconciliation. Despite the variety of negative effects arising from these events, the Axis threat to Yugoslavia cannot be considered the root cause of the Sporazum's failure. It is perhaps more accurately assessed as one agent of this failure. The fundamental causes were internal.

The Sporazum proved unable to unify Yugoslavia against the foreign threat because it failed to address the Croatian question adequately. Its tentative provisions for solving the interdependent problems of state organization, territorial demarcation, and

parliamentary elections provided no adequate basis for their consensual resolution. No formula could be found for addressing Croatian concerns which did not impinge upon vital Serbian interests. Conversely, Serbian demands were inimical to basic tenets of the Croatian national idea. Although the danger of foreign aggression certainly aggravated these conflicts in the period 1939-1941, it cannot be said to have created them.

In actuality, the Sporazum's provisional nature did not cause the impasse which stifled Yugoslavia's reorganization; rather, it resulted from the gridlock of conflicting goals and values which marked the previous century of Serbian and Croatian national development. No consensus existed, then or later, for a Serb-Croat compromise on the fundamental issues of state organization and national territories. Serbs and Croats alike demanded an agreement which would relieve the unbearable national friction, but none was truly possible that could satisfy both sides. Their respective quests for fulfillment within a nation-state framework were mutually exclusive. To this date they have remained so.

* * *

Yugoslavia's dissolution has occurred (and is still underway) as this work has taken shape. This fact provides a rather unique opportunity to reflect briefly on the Sporazum's place in the life cycle of Yugoslavia, Croatian and Serbian nationalism, and the Yugoslav idea.

Many observers have correctly noted that the tenuous unity of 1918 and 1939 resulted as a defensive reaction to common danger. In 1918, the Italian Army, internal disorder, and the pending peace conferences posed a variety of threats. Despite Croatian desires for a nation-state of their own, or at least some confederal arrangement which would approach this status, Croat representatives assented to an unconditional union with Serbia.

As the external dangers waned in the 1920s and 1930s, Croat nationalists gave wide rein to their pursuit of the nation-state ideal. Serbian leaders had essentially never deviated from their pursuit of national aims; to a significant extent, they transposed them onto a Yugoslav framework. Each party pursued its respective aims at the other's expense throughout the interwar period.

The Sporazum, of course, sought to repair the resulting damage by giving the Croats a new stake in the common state. As has been shown, however, the primary impetus for Paul's initiative was the very real threat of attack by Germany or Italy. Macek's eventual offer to accept a provisional agreement was likewise a direct result of his conclusion that war was imminent.

In the wake of the disasters of the Second World War, Tito and the Communist Party reunited the state under a fundamentally different version of the Yugoslav idea. This version established communism as the defining factor of political and social life, and met with a great deal of success; however, it had to struggle from its very inception to assert and maintain its supremacy over centrifugal nationalist tendencies. Reduced to the barest

essentials, the political history of postwar Yugoslavia is the story of its attempts to satisfy particularist ambitions within a socialist framework.²

Yugoslav solidarity was most apparent in times of real or perceived danger, such as the aftermath of the 1948 Tito-Stalin split and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.³ The economic and political devolution resulting from the "social and socialist self-management system" during the 1950s and 1960s facilitated the resurgence of nationalism in many areas, but most notably in Croatia. Tito's strong measures temporarily halted this trend in the early 1970s, but decentralizing reforms culminating in the new 1974 constitution made Yugoslavia a loose federation of nearly sovereign republics.⁴

Tito's death in 1980 deprived these republics of their most significant remaining integrative "institution." State leadership devolved upon an ungainly rotating presidency designed to ensure

²Several outstanding studies explore the interaction between socialism, federalism, and nationalism in postwar Yugoslavia. See Paul Shoup, Communism and the Yugoslav National Question (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1968); Frits Hondius, The Yugoslav Community of Nations (The Hague: Mouton, 1968); Dennison Rusinow, The Yugoslav Experiment: 1948-74 (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1977); Pedro Ramet, Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia: 1963-1983 (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1984); Pedro Ramet, ed., Yugoslavia in the 1980s (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985).

³George W. Hoffman and Fred Warner Neal, Yugoslavia and the New Communism (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1962), 142-45; Stephen Clissold, ed., Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union, 1939-1973: A Documentary Survey (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1975), 57; Rusinow, Yugoslav Experiment, 39, 241, 245.

⁴Dennison Rusinow, "Nationalities Policy and the 'National Question,'" in Yugoslavia in the 1980s, 132-42.

equality of representation along national lines. The system rapidly sank into political and economic stagnation. By the 1980s, Yugoslavia was increasingly paralyzed by its modern constitutional equivalent of the liberum veto. Any dissatisfied republic could--and often did--prevent effective action by a system constitutionally bound to unanimity. It is almost certainly no coincidence that these centrifugal processes prospered, and accelerated, in the era of superpower détente.⁵

The eventual disintegration of the Warsaw Pact and the end of the Cold War removed any semblance of a foreign threat to Yugoslavia. For the first time in the history of her peoples, they could freely opt for union or separation without the threat of foreign military or political pressure. In the unique vacuum resulting from the sudden and massive collapse of the European status quo, the heretofore impossible became possible. Foreign political considerations, which played a decisive role in Yugoslavia's unification, were decisive by their very absence in 1991.

That Slovenia and Croatia seceded is convincing testimony that the Yugoslav idea was less attractive to them than the alluring vision of the nation-state, at least in the unique circumstances of the times. In the case of Croatia, however, this fit a pattern that held throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For in Croatian eyes, the idea of Yugoslav unity was always primarily a

⁵ibid. Though it is beyond the scope of the present work to detail the collapse of Yugoslavia, the journal Yugoslav Survey for the years 1988-1991 is almost completely devoted to documenting the crisis. The picture which clearly emerges from these documents is the complete paralysis resulting from the constitutional requirement for unanimity at the republic level.

mechanism for the protection of the Croatian national identity. Their choice of a Croatian national state in 1991 was the logical conclusion to a century and a half of uneasy partnership between Croat nationalism, Serbian unitary centralism, and the Yugoslav idea.

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Primary sources are further subdivided into unpublished and published materials. Unpublished primary materials include archival sources and oral interviews. Published primary sources are subdivided into three categories: official publications; press sources; and memoirs, diaries, and autobiographical materials.

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APPENDIX 1
TRANSLATED TEXT OF THE SPORAZUM¹

Serbo-Croatian Agreement of August 20, 1939

Translation:

Source: Avala, August 26, 1939.

Considering that Yugoslavia is the best guarantee for the independence and progress of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes;

With a view to entirely safeguarding the public interests;

The President of the Royal Government, Mr. Dragisa Cvetkovic, and the President of the Croatian Peasant Party and of the Peasant Democrat Coalition, Dr. Vladko Macek, have, after lengthy consultations concerning the solution of the Croatian problem agreed as follows:

(1) It is necessary to form a joint government. This government shall, after approval granted by the competent factions and on the basis of Article 116 of the Constitution, proceed to form the Banovina of Croatia, upon which shall be transferred the corresponding jurisdiction of the State and which shall enjoy the political laws which are to be promulgated. In agreement with the competent factions this Government shall make all necessary preparations to reorganize the State community.

(2) The banovinas of the Save [Savska] and of the Seacoast [Primorska], as well as the districts of Dubrovnik, Sid, Ilok, Brcko, Gradacac, Derventa, Travnik and Fojnica shall be joined together to form a unit which shall be called the Banovina of Croatia.²

¹Branko M. Peselj, "Serbo-Croatian Agreement of 1939 and American Foreign Policy," Journal of Croatian Studies 11-12 (1970-71): 71-73. Peselj quotes Enclosure 1 in Lane to State Dept., 860h.00/1088, Aug. 31, 1939, RG 59, National Archives, Washington, D. C. Avala was the Official Information Agency.

Villages and municipalities which have no Croatian majority shall be separated from the above-mentioned districts attached to the Banovina of Croatia.

In these new units the equality of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as regards participation in public services shall be recognized, just as in the entire State territory.

(3) Likewise the equality of recognized religions shall be insured. Fundamental rights of civic and political equality shall be guaranteed by the Constitution.

(4) Matters pertaining to Agriculture, Commerce and Industry, Forest and Mines, Public Works, Social Welfare and Public Health, Public Instruction, Physical Culture, Justice and Internal Administration shall be transferred within the jurisdiction of the Banovina of Croatia.

All other matters shall remain within the jurisdiction of the representatives of the authority of the State in the entire territory of the State.

Likewise certain matters of particular importance shall remain within the jurisdiction of the State, such as:

Matters pertaining to State security, action against anti-State and destructive propaganda, police intelligence service for purposes of insuring public peace and order;

The granting of citizenship shall be under the jurisdiction of the banovina except the granting or withdrawal of citizenship under provisions of extraordinary procedure;

Mining legislation, State mining enterprises. All mining concessions which are of interest to the national defense shall be granted by the banovina upon agreement with the military

²Here a paragraph from the original Serbo-Croatian text is missing. It reads: "The final territory of the Banovina of Croatia shall be established when the State is reorganized; at that time economic, geographic and political factors shall be considered." (Peselj, 71 [note 238.])

administration. In case of difference, such matters shall be settled by the Council of Ministers;

Construction and maintenance of State means of communication and other State property;

Matters pertaining to religion;

International juridical relations, so that the legal assistance in non-litigious matters shall be effected directly through courts;

Foreign trade as well as trade between the banovina and other parts of the State (unity of customs and trade areas);

Jurisdiction relative to measures and weights and protection of industrial property, private insurance and insurance companies;

Legislation relative to bills of exchange, checks, commercial matters, bankruptcies, obligations, navigation and copyright;

Determination of penalties for violation of provisions relative to matters within the competence of the State;

Prescription by laws of the fundamental principles of the educational policy, as well as of the basic principles relating to local autonomies;

General principles of labor legislation and insurance, as well as the general principles of laws relative to water;

In order to insure national defence the military administration shall have the necessary influence in the fields of production and communications.

(5) The Government shall begin the transfer of the jurisdiction of the State upon the Banovina of Croatia immediately after the formation of this banovina.

The Banovina of Croatia shall have the necessary financial autonomy in order that it may successfully carry out its affairs.

The final forms of the jurisdiction of the Banovina of Croatia shall be determined at the time of the reorganization of the State.

The legislative authority in matters within the jurisdiction of the Banovina of Croatia shall be exercised jointly by the King and the Sabor (Croatian Diet).

The Sabor shall consist of representatives freely elected by the nation by means of general, equal, direct and secret ballot with minorities represented.

The executive authority in matters within the jurisdiction of the Banovina of Croatia shall be exercised by the King through the Ban.

The Ban of the Banovina of Croatia shall be appointed and dismissed by the King.

The Ban shall be responsible to the King and the Sabor.

All written acts of the royal authorities in matters relating to the affairs of the Banovina of Croatia shall be countersigned by the Ban who shall assume responsibility for them. Courts shall carry out judicial matters in the Banovina of Croatia. Their verdicts and decisions shall be issued in the name of the King under the law.

The control as regards the application of the Constitution and of State laws by the banovina authorities shall be exercised by the State.

A Constitutional Court shall be established for the settlement of differences between the State and the Banovina and in order to ascertain whether a law is constitutional or not.

(6) The extent of the jurisdiction and the situation of the Banovina of Croatia shall be guaranteed by special constitutional

provisions which cannot be modified without the consent of this banovina.³

The government shall promulgate new decrees covering the press, associations, conferences and meetings, the election of deputies as well as all other affairs, in so far as this would be necessary for the national agreement.

³This provision was not incorporated into the implementing decree of Aug. 26, 1939. (See Peselj, 73 [note 239].)